

# Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program Guidelines



This program offers cost-shared grants to business for accessibility-related improvements.

Grants are intended to improve overall accessibility and create welcoming commercial environments that persons with disabilities can access for business and employment opportunities. Grants are limited to \$100,000 per applicant per year.

This program is part of the Province of Nova Scotia's commitment to equal opportunity and inclusive communities.

## Is your business eligible?

Your business must meet three requirements:

- 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.

## Ineligible

- Businesses not registered with the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stocks
- Franchises unless locally owned
- Features and improvements required by law or legislation
- Residential rental properties
- Businesses considered closed to the public, for members only
- Not-for-profit agencies and municipalities – See the Community ACCESS-Ability Program at <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/community-access-ability-program>

## Is your project eligible?

- Your business hasn't been approved for business accessibility funding yet this fiscal year—our fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31.
- Your project includes items from one or more of our 5 funding categories.
- If your project includes Built Environment construction or renovations, then it meets the Schedule "C" Barrier Free Design requirements of the Nova Scotia Building Code: <https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/bcregs.htm>

## Other regulatory references that may help with your project

You are encouraged to refer to and incorporate these into your project, when applicable.

Canadian Standards Association, CSA, Technical Standards

- Accessible Design for the Built Environment, CSA-B651-12
- Accessible Design for Self-Service Interactive Devices, CAN/CSA-B651.2
- Accessible Design for Automated Banking Machines, CSA-B651.1
- Customer Service Standard for People with Disabilities, CSA B480
- Inclusive Design for an Aging Population, CAN/CSA B659
- Electrical Aids for Physically Disabled Persons, CSA Z323.3.1
- Lifts for Persons with Physical Disabilities, CSA-B355
- Motor Vehicles for the Transportation of Persons with Physical Disabilities, CSA-D409
- Transportable Mobility Aids, CAN/CSA-Z604

United States, Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design: <https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADAStandards/2010ADAStandards.pdf>

Yukon Government

- Barrier Free Design: Illustrated Guide: [http://www.community.gov.yk.ca/pdf/2012\\_BarrierFreeDesignGuide.pdf](http://www.community.gov.yk.ca/pdf/2012_BarrierFreeDesignGuide.pdf)

## Funding Guidelines

Funds are available for cost-shared grants to eligible businesses that wish to make places of business more accessible for consumers and employees with disabilities.

**Risks of spending before approval:** If you incur project expenditures before getting formal project approval, you assume the risk of those costs not being approved. Such expenditures may be eligible for cost sharing under this program, but only when incurred within the government's current fiscal year (Province of Nova Scotia's fiscal year starts April 1 of current year and ends March 31 of the following year).

**Leased premises:** Funding applications for improvements to leased premises are considered when the lease period extends to at least two 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/hr. For skilled labour and professional services, applicants may use contractor's or professional's commercial rates. Include a copy of the contractor's certified ID card, Red Seal certification, professional designations, or proof of incorporation.

**New construction and major renovations:** Costs for features that exceed the building code may be eligible expenses, such as installing visual fire alarms or wheelchair lifts.

By law, new construction projects **must** conform to the Nova Scotia Building Code. Required building code features are not eligible expenses under this program. For the purposes of this program, renovations that affect more than 75% of usable floor space are also considered new construction.

**Categories:** Applicants may apply under one or more categories.

[See below.](#)

**Overall grant limit:** The maximum grant amount available per year is \$100,000 per applicant.

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

## Funding Categories

### Built Environment and Accessibility Certification

**Objective:**

To remove physical barriers for persons (customers and employees) to access business services.

**Eligible expenses:**

- 1 Improvements to the physical environment of a business, including such things as “curb cuts” on private property, providing accessible parking, making bathrooms accessible, installing automatic door openers, creating barrier free paths of travel, pertaining to the following:
  - Existing facility renovations/enhancements that meet or exceed the accessibility requirements of the building code are eligible.
  - New construction projects that exceed the building code are eligible.
  - Other improvements that improve the safety of individuals or further a facility’s goal to be universally accessible—considered on a case-by-case basis.

- 2 Design and permit fees: the design of the above-mentioned improvements to the built environment and any applicable building permit/development fees.
- 3 Audit and certification: a Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) Audit and Certification from the Canadian Standards Association, CSA.

**Funding available:**

- 1 Up to 2/3 of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$50,000
- 2 Design and permit fees: up to 15% of construction costs associated with the accessibility improvement, to a maximum of \$15,000.
- 3 Audit and certification: up to 2/3 of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$20,000. Businesses can apply for multiple buildings or sites, owned or leased, if applicable. Grant funds are awarded after a facility has received its CSA approval and submitted proof of certification.

## **Accessible Communication and Information**

**Objective:**

Ensure that all customers, clients, and employees can access information related to a business

**Eligible expenses:**

Any improvement that permits persons with disability to communicate with a commercial or business enterprise, including

- Accessible web design
- Accessible signage, both analogue 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
- Captioning of commercial videos

**Funding available:**

Up to 2/3 of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$30,000

## **Assistive Devices**

**Objective:**

Ensure that employees and consumers who are persons with disabilities have the devices they need to effectively do their jobs and access places of business

**Eligible expenses:**

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

For fixed devices such as handrails and adaptive washroom fixtures, apply under the Built Environment category.

**Funding available:**

Up to 2/3 of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$30,000

## Accessible Transportation

### Objective:

Improve accessible transportation options for employees and customers via access to shuttle services, fleet vehicles, and taxis

### Eligible expenses:

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

### Funding available:

Up to 2/3 of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$20,000

Vehicle must be less than 2 years old. The grant will be written off over three years in equal amounts. Should applicant sell or transfer ownership of the vehicle within that three-year period, they must repay the pro-rated amount remaining.

## Universal Design Capacity Building

### Objective:

Develop universal design capacity within the professional-technical services community and train disabled persons in this field

### Eligible expenses:

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

### Funding available:

Up to 3/4 of eligible expenses



## How to apply

- 1 Speak with** the Business ACCESS-Ability program officer about your proposed project before completing the application form—contact information below.
- 2 Complete** the Business ACCESS-Ability Program Application form.
- 3 Use** the checklist 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.

**Your submission can't be sent for evaluation until we have everything we need.**

## Approval process

- We accept applications until the grant program is 100% expended.
- We check applications for completeness—refer to the checklist.
- We review complete applications within 14 days.
- 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

- The panel makes recommendations for approval to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.
- The review, evaluation, and approval process may take up to 8 weeks.

## **Funding Payment Conditions**

- If you are approved for funding, you will get a letter that outlines our terms and conditions to sign and return.
- If you declared any non-repayable contributions, these must be used for the activity as described in the 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 don't 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.

## **Address for submitting applications**

Business ACCESS-Ability Grant, CCH-CSR

1741 Brunswick St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

PO Box 456, Station Central

Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

[sbaccess@novascotia.ca](mailto:sbaccess@novascotia.ca)

Fax: 902-424-0710

## **For more information**

Wayne Matheson

Business ACCESS-Ability Program Officer

Work: 902-424-4408

Toll Free: 1-866-231-3882

[novascotia.ca/BusinessAccessibilityGrant](http://novascotia.ca/BusinessAccessibilityGrant)

## Checklist of Required Documentation

- Description of business:** Include how long has the business been in existence.
- Description of existing place of business:** Describe current layout and issues. Include photos/sketches/drawings for clarity.
- Documented use of place of business:** Identify activities that take place and groups that use the place of business and their frequency of use.
- Description of proposed project:** Describe the project in detail, including how the project will make the existing place of business accessible or compliment current accessible features, and how it will benefit the surrounding community.
- Copy of lease agreement or proof of ownership:** For proposed improvements to leased space, include written approval of property owner and copy of current lease. For proof of ownership, include the deed or property assessment.
- Other grants:** Identify all other sources of grant funds that will be used for the project.
- Proof of insurance:** Include the whole insurance policy or the portion that states the coverage period and indicates that the equipment or property are insured and type of coverage, such as for fire and vandalism. Renewal notices are not valid proof.
- Proof of registration as a for-profit entity:** Include evidence of Nova Scotia Joint Stock registration and identify how long the business has existed.
- Detailed estimates:** For projects totaling less than \$10,000, include 2 quotes. For projects above \$10,000, include 3 quotes. If required number of quotes cannot be obtained, explain why. Identify the successful quote and give reasons for vendor selection.

- ❑ **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:** Before and After photos help define project scope. Include if available.
- ❑ **Drawings, sketches, maps:** Engineered drawings, maps, and illustrations help identify scope and describe the project. Include if available.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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

**Maybe.** Funding may be available for the areas 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 to the NSBC regulations, Table 3.8.2.2. You must include a map of the paving project that shows the paved and accessible areas and the cost of the entire paving project. Funding available: Up to 1/2 of eligible expenses.

## **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.

## **Is my application limited to one category of funding only?**

**No,** you may apply in 5 categories if you have improvements under each. Grant amounts are limited to \$100,000 per applicant per year.

## **Is an elevator wheelchair platform lift eligible? Under what funded category would this fall?**

**Yes,** elevators or wheelchair lifts are eligible. Permanent structures fall under the Built Environment category. Movable equipment falls under the Assistive Device category.

## **Are membership-based businesses eligible for funding?**

**Yes,** when three 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 is accessible. Improvements to the pathway and entrance may be eligible for funding. Discuss this with the Business ACCESS-Ability program officer.

**My business wants to upgrade our facility and include meaningful adaptations for our current and future disabled employees. Can this program help with these initiatives?**

**Yes**, as described in the guidelines.

**I'm 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. But 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 standard—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. New construction is eligible only for the portion that exceeds the requirements of the building code.