ECRL Operational Accessibility Plan 2025-2026

Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL) was a member of the Interregional Advisory Committee for Library Accessibility (IACLA) until the committee disbanded in April 2025. This committee provided advice to the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL), Cape Breton Regional Library (CBRL), Colchester East Hants Public Library (CEHPL), Cumberland Public Libraries (CPL), Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL), and Western Counties Regional Library (WCRL) on identifying, preventing, and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. At least half of the members of the advisory committee had a disability or represented an organization that represents people with disabilities. The committee played a pivotal role in helping the participating regional libraries become accessible, in compliance with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act (2017), and establishing a solid foundation for library regions to build upon.

The IACLA has released the 2025 Accessibility Plan, which has been approved by the ECRL Board of Directors. This plan outlines the commitments ECRL has made to improving the accessibility of public library services. The ECRL Operational Accessibility Plan for 2025-2026 outlines specific actions ECRL will undertake to help achieve those commitments.

Area for action outlined by the IACLA report and ECRL's goals include:

Collections

☐Develop an annual engagement survey for staff and the public related to accessibility will be developed to integrate accessibility into core operations and ensure we are meeting public demand for accessible formats and materials.

Employment

☐All staff will receive at least one targeted professional development or training course to improve their skills and knowledge of accessibility-related services.

Information and Communication

☐Establish ECRL's Accessibility Advisory Committee:

☐Establish relationships with all Municipal units' accessibility committees for cross-appointments and information sharing.

☐Develop a community recruitment campaign for volunteers.

☐Develop an agenda for the inaugural meeting, including goals, expectations, and roles to be filled.

☐Establish quarterly impact reporting schedules for municipal units in plain language to better understand the value of library services & the return on their investment.

Programs and Services

☐Improve programming promotion and communications by including alt text, image descriptions, and venue accessibility information.

☐Explore the feasibility and demand for adapted programming like sensory storytimes and library visits.

Built Environment

☐Advocate for improvements at library branches with Municipal partners to ensure we meet the newly enacted Standard for the Built Environment.

☐Encourage municipalities to explore accessibility certifications (i.e. Rick Hansen) and available funding to offset costs and partner with municipal recreation and public works departments to implement changes.