



Abilities Centre is the only non-profit organization in Canada with a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to accessibility and inclusion. As a community hub, research lab and inclusion incubator, we engage more than 100,000 visitors each year in programs, lead research and advocacy on inclusion issues. We have vital relationships with municipalities, school boards, health-care organizations, employment service providers, sport organizations and other non-profit organizations to offer a range of programs and services to our community ensuring that accessibility and inclusion is embedded in the fabric of the Durham Region. Beyond our regional services, we are delivering programs that are innovative, scalable and transferable to other communities in Ontario and Canada. These programs address specific accessibility and inclusion gaps for identified stakeholder groups within our mandate of improving quality of life by supporting health and wellness, social inclusion and economic participation.

The LEAD Process, a system integrated methodology to achieving accessibility and inclusion, is one of the core services we have scaled and implemented in and outside of Ontario. The goal of LEAD is to assess and analyze internal practices, processes, and the culture of the organization so that strategic planning and implementation across the organization takes place through the lens of accessibility and inclusion. LEAD is built around 3 key areas of self-assessment:

1. Organizational Management – includes self-assessment in areas of organizational leadership, governance, structure and strategy;
2. Organizational Resources - includes self-assessment in areas of financial, people, and supplier and partnership management;
3. Organizational Delivery - includes self-assessment in areas of program and service development and delivery, communication and marketing, facility and technology support.

Through an evidence-based lens the LEAD Process will support the Town of Cobourg to self-identify areas of improvement resulting in building accessibility and inclusion initiatives & processes that are sustainable and scalable. The process will help to assess where Township sees themselves and how they align with accessibility laws, policies, strategies, recovery planning, funding priorities and community representation.

Staff will participate in a self-assessment process facilitated by Abilities Centre, where they evaluate, rate and provide evidence of their accessibility and inclusion policies, best practices and programs/services. While there is a rating system incorporated into the various themes, this is not the main focus. The real benefit comes from identifying areas



for improvement and the creation of an action plan with attached quick wins, and short, mid and long-term goals, allowing for accessibility and inclusion to constantly be part of the planning. Abilities Centre will facilitate the self-assessment and improvement planning process and provide three monitoring/evaluation follow-up sessions within the 12-month period to Town of Cobourg. This will include identifying additional resources needed to operationalize the action plans. Timelines for the follow-ups will be determined in partnership with the Town of Cobourg.

The overall Objectives of LEAD Process is to support:

- Town of Cobourg to embed accessibility and inclusion strategies across the whole organization
- Town of Cobourg to develop employment strategies for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce (including volunteers, coaches, board members) that includes persons with a disability
- Town of Cobourg to challenge organizational sport systems and processes that do not promote accessibility and inclusion
- Town of Cobourg to set up systems, programs and services that allow for full and meaningful participation of individuals with disabilities from the beginning and not as an afterthought

The expected overall impact of LEAD includes:

- As Town of Cobourg slowly re-opens programs during the pandemic, and assesses their physical environment & location, the LEAD Improvement Plan will support full accessibility of their built environment and their organizational culture, allowing them to successfully implement accessible and inclusive programs and services for people with disabilities;
- Increased confidence in engaging and consulting with persons with disabilities in strategic decision making;
- Increased competency and effectiveness in leveraging consumer spending and employing persons with disabilities;
- Improved understanding of how to enable active and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in their community's programs and services;
- Improved understanding and compliance with accessibility legislation, federally and provincially;
- Increasing opportunities for people with disabilities and intersecting identities to contribute to the provincial economy by leveraging their spending power.