

multi-year accessibility plan 2025-2029



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message from the City Librarian

Equity, diversity and inclusion are fundamental values of Toronto Public Library (TPL). They are core to our mission to promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment. Through our [2025-2029 Strategic Plan](#), we're more committed than ever to advancing accessibility, removing barriers, and creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for all Torontonians.

As part of that commitment, we have developed this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to improve access to our programs, services, and spaces. We want to ensure that our customers and staff with disabilities feel welcome at the library and can benefit from our services how and when they need. This Plan is a foundational piece of our Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Program, which is focused on implementing system-wide policies, plans, processes, and training to further advance accessibility and inclusion at TPL.

Our aim, in addition to exceeding our legislated compliance requirements under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), is to ensure that the principles of accessibility – dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity – are reflected in everything we do. We will continue to stay accountable to our Board, staff, and customers through annual reporting on the progress of our Plan, which we will share on our website.

As we recognize and acknowledge the inequities facing persons with disabilities in our society, this work continues to be a high priority for us at TPL. We look forward to working with our colleagues, partners and communities to understand and remove accessibility barriers, and set an example for other organizations in creating and maintaining a truly equitable and inclusive environment for our staff and customers with disabilities.

Vickery Bowles

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian, Toronto Public Library



introduction

statement of commitment

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) is committed to providing equitable access to library service that meets the changing needs of all Torontonians, including persons with disabilities, in a welcoming and supportive environment. The Library will develop and support a work and service environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the principles of dignity, independence, equal opportunity, and integration. TPL will meet and exceed the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its regulations.

In developing and delivering services and programs to persons with disabilities, the Library will be guided by the service values of equity and diversity in the treatment of individuals. The Library will establish, implement and monitor policies, services and practices that balance the needs of persons with disabilities and others to support the accessibility standards of customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment, established under the AODA.

background

In 2005, the Government of Ontario enacted the AODA. The goal of the AODA is to remove and prevent barriers in our society to empower people with disabilities to contribute and participate more fully in their communities.

To achieve this goal, accessibility standards were developed and enacted by the Government of Ontario in the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Employment
- Information and Communications
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

In 2011, the General Requirements, along with the accessibility standards related to Information and Communications, Employment, and Transportation were harmonized into one Regulation under the AODA called the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

In 2013, the Design of Public Spaces Standards were enacted and incorporated into the IASR. The requirements under this Standard focus on ensuring that aspects of public spaces, such as exterior paths of travel, outdoor eating areas, and parking, are designed and delivered in an accessible and inclusive manner.

In 2016, the previously separate Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. Reg. 429/07 under the AODA) were amended and incorporated into the IASR.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Program

Launched in 2021, the AODA Program is a multi-year, organizational-wide initiative that is focused on:

- Ensuring compliance with the AODA and the IASR.
- Developing, reviewing, and implementing system-wide policies, plans, processes, and training that will advance accessibility and inclusion.
- Identifying, removing, and preventing systemic accessibility barriers.

Led by TPL's Manager, Accessibility, the Program is supported by a cross-divisional working group, internal subject matter experts, and senior leadership sponsors.

Under the AODA Program, TPL has established the [Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy](#), instituted a process for providing accessible formats and communication supports for library virtual and in-person programs, meetings, and events, and launched the Accessibility 101 curriculum as a learning opportunity for staff, volunteers, and third parties providing programs and services on behalf of TPL to the public. Since January 2023, over 2,200 staff and 2,400 volunteers and third parties have completed this curriculum.



about the multi-year accessibility plan

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) is TPL's long-term accessibility road map. It is a key piece of the Library's AODA Program, which outlines the actions that will be undertaken to meet AODA requirements. It also includes the outcomes we are aiming to achieve that will advance the accessibility of our digital and physical spaces, services, programs, and employment practices.

Developed in collaboration with staff from across TPL, the MYAP, in conjunction with the [Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy](#), helps to ensure we continue to remove barriers and create and provide an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environment that meets the individual accessibility needs of our staff and customers with disabilities.

The 2025-2029 MYAP aligns with [TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan](#), and TPL's 2025-2029 Digital Strategy. With mutually-supporting initiatives and objectives in all three documents, the MYAP is key to ensuring that accessibility is embedded in how we serve our staff, customers, and the broader communities of Toronto.

The sections found in this plan list the accessibility standards under the IASR relevant to TPL. Under each of them, we've outlined the initiatives we will undertake over the next five years and the associated outcomes we're aiming to achieve for our customers and staff.



guiding principles

These guiding principles underpin all of TPL's initiatives to eliminate barriers and foster accessibility and inclusion for staff and customers with disabilities.

legislated accessibility compliance

Throughout all aspects of its daily operations, the Library is committed to meeting and exceeding its legislated compliance obligations under the AODA and the IASR. As mentioned earlier, this commitment is one of the primary goals of TPL's AODA Program.

accessibility by design

The Library strives to apply an Accessibility by Design approach to all of its projects and initiatives by incorporating accessibility requirements and best practices throughout the planning, development, design, implementation, and evaluation stages. Applying this approach prevents inadvertently creating accessibility barriers and the need to spend additional cost and time removing those barriers before the project or initiative is implemented.

a shared responsibility

Advancing accessibility and inclusion at TPL is a shared responsibility of all staff, at all levels of the Library. This collective approach ensures that accessibility is considered and embedded across TPL, and is not the sole responsibility of a select few individuals.

equitable and inclusive access

The Library is committed to providing equitable and inclusive access to our services, facilities, information and communications, technology, and employment opportunities in a manner that meet the accessibility needs of our staff and customers with disabilities.

accessible, inclusive, and welcoming spaces

TPL builds accessibility requirements into the design of its branches, facilities, bookmobiles, and digital services to ensure all staff and customers—including people with disabilities—can access spaces that are inclusive, welcoming, and easy to use.





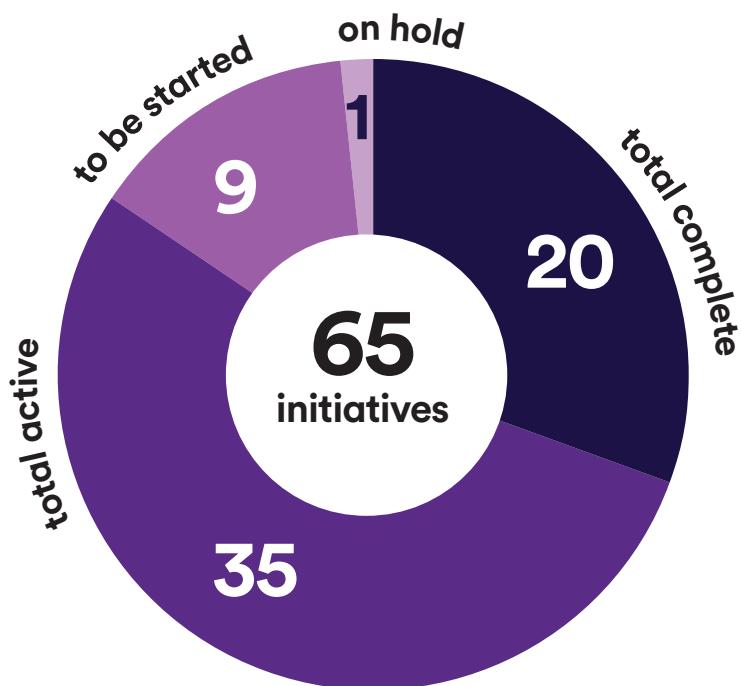
looking back at 2021-2024

Beginning with its approval by TPL's City Librarian and senior leadership team in December 2021, and subsequent endorsement by the Library's Board of Directors, the 2021-2024 MYAP set the course for how we would meet our compliance obligations under the AODA, while at the same time, identifying and addressing accessibility barriers throughout the Library.

Over the three years, TPL made steady progress on its 65 MYAP initiatives across all of the relevant accessibility standards. Building on work completed each year, the Library advanced a number of important priority initiatives to improve accessibility and inclusion. The list below highlights some of those key accomplishments.

- Published the 2022 and 2023 MYAP Status Report to demonstrate TPL's progress on implementing initiatives under the 2021-2024 MYAP.
- Launched the Accessibility 101 Curriculum, a learning opportunity for staff, volunteers, and third parties providing goods, services, and facilities on behalf of TPL to the public.
- Updated the Rules of Conduct staff bulletin on welcoming service animals to reflect legislated requirements.
- Established a process for providing accessible formats and communication supports, including Vendors of Record, to deliver live closed captioning, American Sign Language interpretation, and a variety of accessible formats upon request for TPL programs, meetings, and events.
- Introduced an updated and revised version of the Library's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy to reflect current legislated compliance requirements and TPL practices.
- Developed and launched a staff learning program focused on creating accessible digital documents.

Over the three-year period of the Plan, ending on December 31, 2024, 20 initiatives were completed, 35 initiatives remained active, with an additional nine initiatives that had not been started, and one initiative on hold. Planned initiatives that have not been completed as part of the 2021-2024 MYAP have been reviewed and, where appropriate, have rolled-over and been integrated into the 2025-2029 MYAP.



Where appropriate, the results of completed initiatives have been incorporated into the standard operating practices of specific divisions. This has ensured that sustainable accessibility supports and best practices are provided to our staff and customers with disabilities on an ongoing basis. For example, TPL's Communications, Programming, and Customer Engagement division provide live closed captioning as a regular feature for key staff and public meetings and events, such as Town Halls and Ask Me Anything sessions.

One notable accomplishment, amongst many in 2024, was the launch of an accessibility audit of TPL's branches. The preliminary findings of the audit informed the development of a multi-year, phased approach to addressing accessibility issues associated with TPL's physical spaces. Further information on the next steps in this initiative can be found in the following section.



looking ahead to 2025-2029

As we embark on the next phase of our accessibility journey and look ahead to the next five years, we will continue to leverage the important work that has begun to advance accessibility. We used the development of the 2025–2029 MYAP as a chance to review the 45 initiatives from the last plan and make them clearer, more streamlined, and better aligned.

To create a more efficient and actionable set of initiatives, staff from across TPL:

- Developed new initiatives with a broader purpose and intent, bringing existing initiatives under them to align efforts and reduce duplication.
- Removed any existing initiatives that didn't apply to an accessibility requirement under the IASR. Where appropriate, these initiatives were moved to divisional work plans.
- Consolidated new initiatives with a similar intent into one initiative with new wording that captures the overall purpose.

Depending on the nature and scope of a particular initiative, smaller projects may be needed to help complete it over the next five years. The division leading the initiative will determine what those projects are.

Over the next five years and beyond, ensuring TPL's branches and locations are accessible and inclusive to persons with disabilities will remain a high priority. To address the issues identified through the audit, facility-specific Multi-Year Accessibility Plans will be developed, with the goal to bring all locations into compliance by 2035.

These plans will be structured to roll out accessibility upgrades in tandem with the State of Good Repair (SOGR) program. In 2025, we will complete a full accessibility audit for each branch in collaboration with external facility accessibility experts, leading to branch-specific design, action plans and budget projections. The current implementation strategy forecasts completing six to seven accessibility retrofit projects per year over the next 10 years.



section 1: general requirements

The General Requirements under the IASR relate to the establishment of an organizational Statement of Commitment, an accessibility policy, a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, accessible procurement practices, including those related to self-serve kiosks, and accessibility-related learning opportunities for staff, volunteers, and third parties providing programs and services on behalf of TPL to the public.

initiatives

- 1.1 Develop and implement a self-checkout strategy that includes accessible kiosk requirements, as part of the Self-Checkout Modernization Project.
- 1.2 Incorporate accessibility criteria into future procurement processes and documents related to the acquisition of self-serve kiosks.

outcomes

- Self-checkout kiosks that incorporate accessibility features and allow customers with disabilities to check out reading materials independently.
- Self-serve kiosks that foster an accessible and inclusive experience for employees and customers with disabilities.



section 2: information and communication standards

The requirements under the Information and Communication Standards support TPL's commitment to providing access to information and communications in an accessible and inclusive manner that meets an individual's needs, while building staff knowledge and capacity to support this work.

This commitment is achieved by offering accessible options for receiving and responding to customer and staff feedback, providing accessible formats and communication supports for meetings, programs, and events organized and hosted by TPL, and ensuring our website, web content, and web-based applications comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

initiatives

- 2.1** Review and update divisional processes for receiving and responding to feedback and complaints from staff and customers with disabilities to ensure consistency across TPL in a manner that takes into account the individual's accessibility needs.
- 2.2** Provide information related to accessible collections on TPL's website on an ongoing basis, with quarterly reviews for accuracy, timeliness, and relevance.
- 2.3** Ensure that all corporate templates developed by the Communications, Programming, and Customer Engagement (CPCE) division, and all communications and marketing tools provided to internal clients, are accessible and include guidance and training on how to use them.

2.4 Develop guidelines for writing alt text, creating accessible social media posts, and promotional materials for CPCE's programs, and incorporate accessibility best practices into TPL's style guide.

2.5 Institute a process for providing live closed captioning for in-person public and staff programs, meetings, and events upon request.

2.6 Review and update emergency preparedness documentation, business continuity plans, and public and staff emergency response procedures, including evacuation procedures, to ensure they include provisions for persons with disabilities, and provide this information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request.

2.7 Develop and implement a divisional process for the ongoing development and enhancement of Digital Experience platforms, websites and mobile apps, ensuring that all digital content meets or exceeds WCAG requirements.

2.8 Develop a comprehensive training program for staff focused on the accessibility features of collaboration and communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

2.9 Establish a comprehensive process for identifying, providing, maintaining, and supporting assistive hardware and software solutions that meet the information and communication needs of staff and customers with disabilities.

2.10 Provide professional development opportunities, resources, tools, and ongoing support to staff to enhance their design skills and knowledge so they can effectively create accessible marketing, communications, and reporting documents.

2.11 Develop and implement a process to identify, update, and create internal and external documents that support TPL's operations and meet standards for accessible digital documents.

2.12 Develop staff resources on TPL's adaptive and assistive technology to support access to information, collections, programs, and services.

2.13 Investigate assistive listening technologies for programming and events.

2.14 Design and implement accessible and child-friendly feedback channels to gather insights from families about their accessibility needs in Children's programs and spaces.

outcomes

- Greater staff knowledge, resources, and tools to create and provide TPL documents in accessible digital formats.
- Website, web content and web-based applications that meet and exceed the requirements under the WCAG and are compatible with various assistive technologies.
- Greater access to assistive hardware and software to support the information and communication needs of customers and staff with disabilities.
- Greater staff and customer awareness and understanding of the Library's emergency response and preparedness procedures as they relate to persons with disabilities.
- Increased participation of staff and customers with disabilities in the Library's meetings, programs and events by providing accessible formats and communication supports on request.



section 3: customer service standards

While participating in a program, using one of TPL's many services, or simply asking a question to one of our knowledgeable staff, the Customer Service Standards help to foster and maintain an accessible, inclusive, welcoming, and positive experience for our customers with disabilities.

initiatives

- 3.1 Develop AODA customer service training to be included as part of the branch experience resources for staff.
- 3.2 Develop procedures, education, and staff resources on the legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA, related to the Duty to Accommodate customers with disabilities.
- 3.3 Incorporate the Library's Accessibility Policy Statement of Commitment into any revised or newly developed policies and procedures related to customer service.
- 3.4 Update the Library's Service Disruption Guidelines to reflect the applicable requirements under the [Customer Service Standards](#).
- 3.5 Establish branch signage to communicate that service animals and support persons are welcome in the library.

- 3.6** Develop a process to regularly update branch information webpages to ensure that all accessibility features available in the branch are listed and accurate.
- 3.7** Review and improve existing processes for providing an accessible and inclusive user experience in library programming.
- 3.8** Establish, maintain, and track staff training resources and opportunities on welcoming service animals and support persons in the Library's branches, facilities and bookmobiles.

outcomes

- A positive experience for customers with disabilities that meets their individual accessibility needs, while utilizing TPL's programs, services, branches, and bookmobiles.
- An environment that fosters and supports the reading and learning needs of persons with disabilities in an accessible and inclusive manner.
- Greater staff awareness and understanding of accessible customer service best practices, including how to appropriately interact with customers with various types of disabilities.



section 4: employment standards

The Employment Standards serve to ensure that TPL is providing an accessible and inclusive experience for its staff with disabilities throughout their entire career with the Library.

The initiatives in this section centre around various aspects of the employment cycle, including recruiting and acquiring qualified candidates with disabilities, providing timely and appropriate workplace accommodations, and ensuring our emergency response and preparedness and business continuity information for staff incorporate accessibility best practices.

initiatives

- 4.1** Develop a talent acquisition and retention strategy to increase the representation of persons with disabilities in TPL's workforce.
- 4.2** Develop a workplace accommodation program for all TPL staff, informed by the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA.
- 4.3** Develop procedures, education, and resources for staff on the Duty to Accommodate independent contractors with disabilities, informed by the requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA.
- 4.4** Provide information on the Library's workplace accommodation policies and processes in its New Staff Orientation.

4.5 Review and update the Library's return-to-work process for unionized and non-unionized staff.

4.6 Review and update TPL's ergonomics program from an accessibility perspective.

4.7 Provide information on the Library's process for developing individualized workplace emergency response plans for staff with disabilities to all staff as part of onboarding, including all managers and supervisors.

outcomes

- Increased representation of staff with disabilities at all levels of the Library.
- Enhanced awareness and understanding of the Duty to Accommodate, and the process for providing workplace accommodations that support staff's individual accessibility needs.
- More support for staff with disabilities to ensure their safety and security during emergency and evacuation situations.
- Greater staff awareness and understanding of the process for providing ergonomic supports to ensure comfortable and productive work environments.



section 5: design of public spaces standards

With 100 branches, a book distribution facility, and a technology data centre, TPL has made accessibility a key priority in its capital development and renewal projects.

Committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment, the Library integrates AODA compliance into its approach to planning, designing, constructing, and operating its branches and locations in a manner that aligns with the requirements under the [Design of Public Spaces Standards](#), [Ontario Building Code](#), and the [City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines](#).

initiatives

- 5.1 Develop multi-year, branch specific accessibility work plans that include State of Good Repair and Capital Projects to ensure that all branches meet the technical and design requirements under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards and the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines.
- 5.2 Execute on the implementation of the multi-year branch-specific accessibility work plans.

outcomes

- Greater availability of accessibility design features within the Library's branches and public spaces for staff and customers with disabilities.
- Branches and public spaces that comply with the requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standards, Ontario Building Code, and the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines.
- Branches and public spaces free of physical barriers that prevent staff and customers with disabilities from entering the building and navigating the space in a safe, independent manner.



The Toronto Public Library is steadfast in its commitment to fostering an organizational culture that upholds the principles of the AODA – dignity, integration, independence, and equal opportunity. Through this commitment, we will continue to strive towards supporting the information, communication, and learning needs of our staff and customers with disabilities.

Building upon the foundation of its accessibility guiding principles, TPL's 2025-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will continue to guide our work over the next five years in meeting our legislated compliance obligations under the AODA, removing and preventing barriers, and advancing accessibility and inclusion throughout the Library.

TPL has made great strides over the past three years to implement the 2021-2024 MYAP initiatives, and we will continue to build on this important work in the years to come.

As we implement the initiatives in the 2025-2029 MYAP, we will develop and share an annual status report of our ongoing progress in making TPL an even more inclusive and accessible library system for our customers and staff with disabilities.

For questions about the 2025-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, contact:

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Manager, Accessibility
Human Resources Division
Email: dcooper@tpl.ca





appendix: definitions

Accessible Formats

Accessible formats, sometimes called alternate formats, are ways of presenting printed, written, or visual material so that people with print disabilities can access them. People with print disabilities may:

- Be blind or live with low vision
- Have a learning disability that affects reading
- Have a physical disability and be unable to hold or turn pages

Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to:

- Plain language
- Large print
- braille
- Electronic (MS Office, Rich Text, or PDF)
- Audio

Assistive Device

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. Examples include walkers, magnifiers for reading, computer hardware and software, white canes, wheelchairs, scooters, and smart phones or tablets.

Barrier

A barrier is any systemic, attitudinal, technological, informational, or architectural limitation that prevents someone from participating fully in society due to their disability.

Communication Supports

Communication supports are ways for people who cannot access verbal or audio information to receive it visually or ways for people who are non-verbal to communicate with people who speak. For instance, people who do not understand verbal communication may:

- Be Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
- Be Deaf/blind

Some common communication supports include

- **American Sign Language (ASL):** American Sign Language is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, and hard of hearing, and is used by many hearing people as well.
Note: The uppercase “D” in the word Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf to reflect their participation and belonging in Deaf Culture. The lowercase “d” in the word deafened refers to the physical condition of not hearing.
- **Communication Access Real-Time Translation (live captioning):** Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) is the live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text so that individuals who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard-of-hearing can read what is being said in meetings, events, or at personal appointments on a laptop or a larger screen. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely, in both English and French, via a secure website.
- **Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ):** Quebec Sign Language, known in French as Langue des signes québécoise or Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ), is the predominant sign language of Deaf communities used in francophone Canada, primarily in Quebec.
- **Deaf Interpreter:** A Deaf Interpreter (DI) is a specialist who provides interpreting services in American Sign Language , Langues des signes québécoise , and other visual and tactile communication forms used by individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind. As a person who is Deaf, the Deaf Interpreter starts with a distinct set of formative linguistic, cultural, and life experiences that enables nuanced comprehension and interaction in a wide range of visual language and communication forms. These experiences, coupled with professional training, give the Deaf interpreter the ability to facilitate successful communication across all types of interpreted interactions, both routine and high risk.
- **Intervener:** An intervener is a trained professional who acts as the “eyes” and “ears” of a person who is deafblind, providing specialized communication functions, services, and supports.

Disability

As per the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, disability is defined as: (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device, (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability, (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, d) a mental disorder, or(e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Goods, Services, and Facilities

All aspects of the Library as an employer and service provider, including: delivery of goods, services, programs, all information and communication, including verbal, print, audio, video, websites, web applications and web content, other digital technologies, including kiosks, and all buildings, facilities, and public spaces.

Kiosk

An interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, intended for public use that allows customers to access one or more services, products, or both.

Service Animal

An animal that supports a person with a disability, where the animal can be readily identified as one that is being utilized by the individual for reasons relating to their disability. Examples include visual indicators, such as a vest or harness worn by the animal and/or if the individual provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario
- A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario

Support Person

A person who accompanies an individual with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, and/or access to goods, services, or facilities.



