



BETTER BACKSTAGES

Accessibility Toolkit



betterbackstages.ca

The Better Backstages Accessibility Toolkit for Music and Arts Spaces

Phase 1 V1.1

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Meghan Sivani-Merrigan (she/her) is the founder of Halifax-based Apex Arts Access Consulting and the creator of the Better Backstages Accessibility toolkit. With nearly two decades of experience as a touring musician, live sound engineer, and former venue owner-operator combined with her personal experience with disability, she provides a ground-level, expert understanding of accessibility barriers within arts spaces. Her work is dedicated to providing venues and arts organizations with practical, actionable strategies for building a more inclusive stage for all artists.



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Dedicated to the memory of the OG inspiration - my father, **Michael Vernon Merrigan II** (*“Mr. North End”*), Special Education Teacher and original founder of Peak Audio,

In memory of my uncle, **Salim Harji** (*“Stan The Man”*), King of Mishkaki,

In memory of my cousin, **Rahim Harji**, my most trusted confidant.

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Land Acknowledgment

Based in Mi'kma'ki, we acknowledge that the lands on which we work are the traditional and unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq. We recognize and appreciate the ancestral and continued ties of Indigenous Peoples to the lands and waters in the region known as Nova Scotia. We cannot engage in the work of improving accessibility and inclusivity in arts and cultural spaces without recognizing the ongoing and historical impacts of colonialism and settler structures on Indigenous peoples, including those who are Two-Spirit. We also acknowledge the historical oppression and systemic barriers faced by African Nova Scotians and other marginalized communities in our province.

Disability Justice Principles

Disability justice recognizes that disabled people, especially those from marginalized communities, face unique challenges due to intersecting systems of oppression like racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia. It centers the leadership of Black, Indigenous, people of color, and 2SLGBTQIA+ disabled individuals, calling for a reimagining of community that values interdependence over independence.

The Deaf, Disability & Mad Arts Alliance of Canada (DDMAAC) exemplifies these values by promoting artistic expression across a spectrum of disability, deafness, and mental health experiences. Through their work, DDMAAC challenges societal perceptions of disability and highlights the creative power of disabled artists.

Disclaimer

This guide provides general information to help music venues understand accessibility in the built environment. It is not a substitute for professional advice or a comprehensive assessment. It is intended to be a living, breathing document, and will be updated periodically.

The suggestions are for reference only, and any structural changes should be made with input from qualified professionals. The audit is based on best practices from the CSA/ASC B651:23 - National Standard of Canada: Accessible Design for the Built Environment, which go beyond the minimum requirements of building codes.

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Introduction

What Do Brown M&M's and Accessibility Have in Common?



(Original Caption): Picture shows the four members of the band, Van Halen, posing together in front of a mural outside. Left to right, David Lee Roth, Michael Anthony, Alex Van Halen and Eddie Van Halen. (Photo by Lynn Goldsmith/Corbis/VCG via Getty Images)

Van Halen's legendary "no brown M&M's" clause is often misunderstood as rockstar excess. In reality, it was a clever safety check to catch overlooked details and prevent dangerous mistakes.

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In the 1980s, Van Halen toured with massive amounts of gear, far beyond what most venues were used to. Their technical rider outlined precise requirements for rigging, staging, pyrotechnics and safety. David Lee Roth explained:

“We’d pull up with nine eighteen-wheeler trucks, full of gear, where the standard was three trucks, max. And there would be many, many technical errors, whether it was the girders couldn’t support the weight, the flooring would sink in, or the doors weren’t big enough to move the gear through.”

Tucked into the rider was Article 126: “***There will be no brown M&Ms in the backstage area, upon pain of forfeiture of the show.***”

Eddie Van Halen claimed “If we see brown M&M’s, we know we are not in the hands of professionals. If they didn’t bother with this, what else didn’t they bother with? What other corners are being cut?”

Rather than rockstar vanity, the presence of brown M&M’s signaled a red flag to protect the band, their crew and their fans who trusted a venue to be safe. If small details were overlooked, it hinted at larger, potentially life-threatening issues like structural safety or fire hazards.

Designing accessible spaces can also help keep things running smoothly and stress-free for performers and visitors. The cult-classic comedy *This is Spinal Tap* hilariously illustrates this point in a scene where the band gets lost backstage trying to find the stage. Following signs and directions, they wind up in a series of dead ends and confusing corridors, only to end up right where they started. The scene was inspired by a real-life event where Tom Petty, while on tour in Germany, wandered through a maze of doors and found himself on an indoor tennis court instead of the stage. Bad wayfinding doesn’t just frustrate visitors and performers, in large venues it can completely derail a show.

Poor planning and overlooked details can have far worse consequences. One of the worst and most tragic examples in recent history is the Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island in 2003. During a Great White concert, a fire spurning from the guitarist’s pyrotechnics spread and engulfed the whole building within six minutes,

killing 100 people and injuring over 200 others. Many of the survivors experience severe disability in the aftermath.

There were many overlooked details, including:

- ▶▶ The band's pyrotechnics ignited flammable soundproofing foam on the walls and the 12-foot ceiling.
- ▶▶ The nightclub was overcrowded, and the main entrance became blocked, causing a bottleneck effect.
- ▶▶ Bouncers prevented patrons from using the fire exit by the stage claiming it was only for the band to use
- ▶▶ The soundproofing foam turned out to be highly flammable packing foam and not flame-retardant acoustic foam.
- ▶▶ The packing foam covering the fire exit door became engulfed within seconds, with only 20 people escaping through it.
- ▶▶ The fire alarm sounded, but it wasn't connected to the local fire department
- ▶▶ The building lacked a sprinkler system.

At best, bands like Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers get lost backstage; at worst, oversights lead to tragedies like The Station nightclub fire.

Access as a Metric of Care

Accessibility is more than a compliance measure, but a sign of care and attention. Many people think of ramps when they think about accessibility. Holistic accessibility addresses barriers in all forms: physical (the built environment), attitudinal (the adaptive environment), and internal operations (human capacity).

This guide is a practical tool to help in identifying some of those barriers. Through a series of checklists and companion guides, the Better Backstages audit framework equips music venues, arts organizations, and workplaces with actionable ways to create safer, accessible and inclusive music and performing arts scenes through thoughtful, sustainable changes made over time.

This resource centers the voices and expertise of disabled people, moving beyond compliance to embrace disability justice by examining policies and understanding workers rights and employer responsibilities.

Accessibility resources are most effective when informed by the communities they serve. As such, we've included a [feedback mechanism](#) to gather your insights and suggestions directly, which will help to shape amendments or future iterations.

All The Best,

Meghan

Quick Navigation:

This toolkit is divided into 4 modules containing resources, modules, exercises and comprehensive audit and assessment tools to provide the reader with a snapshot of their existing space and the policies and protocols of which their operational foundation is built upon.

Module 1: The Built Environment

This section helps you evaluate and improve the physical accessibility of your venue, inside and outside. It includes the audit checklist and companion guide to assess things like entrances, load-in zones, pathways, bathrooms, stage access and green rooms. The goal is to make sure your space works for people with different mobility needs and disabilities.

1A. The Built Environment Audit Companion Guide

1B. The Built Environment Audit Tool

Module 2: The Adaptive Environment

This section focuses on creating flexible spaces that meet the needs of people from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. It offers practical tips for making your venue welcoming, including guidance on smudging ceremonies, an introduction to DeafSpace principles, implementing all-gender facilities, and creating sensory-friendly backstage areas.

2A. The Adaptive Environment Companion Guide

2B. The Adaptive Environment Audit Tool

Module 3: Access Riders

This section offers a customizable access rider template for artists and performers to communicate their access needs, and a resource directory connects venues with local support services in Nova Scotia and Canada-wide.

3A. Access Rider Template

3B. Access Rider Companion Directory

Module 4: Human Capacity and Internal Workplace Operations

This section focuses on building a strong foundation for accessibility by creating a supportive, safe, and inclusive workplace culture. It provides an audit tool and companion guide to help you review and improve your internal operations, with practical resources on harm reduction, nightlife safety, and preventing workplace violence. You'll also find guidance on employee rights, employer responsibilities, and ways to create a fair, respectful, and healthy environment for both staff and patrons.

4A. Human Capacity Companion Guide

4B. Human Capacity Audit Tool

What Is a Disability?

Disability includes physical or mental conditions that affect a person's ability to function. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act recognizes visible, invisible, episodic, and persistent disabilities, such as:

Physical disabilities: Arthritis, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis.

Sensory disabilities: Blindness, low vision, hearing loss, or Deafness.

Cognitive disabilities: Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism.

Mental illnesses: Depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, substance dependency.

Invisible disabilities: Chronic pain, heart disease, epilepsy.

Episodic disabilities: Conditions with varying periods of health, like arthritis or migraines.

What is ableism?

Ableism is unfair treatment or attitudes toward disabled people. It happens when people assume that having a disability makes someone less capable or less valuable. This can show up in how people speak, act, or design spaces that aren't accessible to everyone. Ableism can also mean ignoring the needs or rights of disabled people in ways that limit their opportunities or independence.

Module 1: The Built Environment

Disclaimer

This guide provides general information to help music venues understand accessibility in the built environment. It is not a substitute for professional advice or a comprehensive assessment.

The suggestions are for reference only, and any changes to a venue should be made carefully, with input from qualified professionals. The audit is based on best practices from the CSA/ASC B651:23 - National Standard of Canada: Accessible Design for the Built Environment, which go beyond the minimum requirements of building codes.

1A. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT COMPANION GUIDE

This tool provides practical guidance for conducting an accessibility audit of your venue's physical space. It focuses on identifying barriers like narrow pathways, harsh lighting, technological limitations, and limited stage access. Designed to support music venues in creating inclusive spaces, the tool helps address the needs of disabled musicians and performers while aligning with common best practices for accessibility.

Tools You Will Need

1. A tape measure for measuring physical spaces like doorways, counters, and pathways.
2. A decibel meter to assess noise levels can help identify problematic areas where a quieter space is preferred. [[iOS](#)] [[Android](#)]
3. A light meter (lux meter) can help you measure lighting conditions where visibility is important, like an evacuation map. [[iOS](#)] [[Android](#)]
4. A Clinometer and bubble level to measure the angle or steepness of a slope, ramp, or surface in relation to the ground. [[iOS](#)] [[Android](#)]
5. A suitcase scale for measuring the amount of force it takes to open doors.
6. A clipboard and pen for taking detailed notes as you move through the space, documenting observations and measurements.
7. A camera or smartphone to capture photos of both barriers and accessibility wins for documentation and reference.
8. Accessibility Audit Checklist. A structured checklist of all key areas to be reviewed.

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Documenting Your Findings

1. Measurements: Use consistent methods when measuring, like recording door widths at their narrowest point.
2. Notes: Keep a log of your findings, linking measurements and photos to specific areas of your space.
3. Photos: Take photo documentation of barriers or accessible features during an audit. This helps to keep track of barriers or accessible features you discover, and it becomes easier to identify the areas assessed and reference measurements later.
 - ▶▶ Start with establishing shots by taking several wide-angled photos of the room you will be assessing. (see Figure 1 on page 5)
 - ▶▶ Take an establishing photo that demonstrates the specific feature being measured, like the threshold of a doorway. (see Figure 2 on page 5)
 - ▶▶ Show the tape measure in place in the next photo, so that it is clear what part is being measured. (see Figure 3 on page 6)
 - ▶▶ Take a close-up photo of the measurement on the tape to capture the exact dimensions. (see Figure 4 on page 6)

How to Take Photos of Your Audit

Figure 1: Wide angle establishing shot.



Figure 2: Closeup of the retractable staircase, establishing the feature to be assessed.



Figure 3: A closeup of the auditor, Leona, holding the tape measurer against the stair riser, establishing it as the feature to be assessed.



Figure 4: A closeup of the measurement of the stair riser showing 6.5 inches.



Glossary of Terms

1:20 Slope

A gentle ramp that goes up 1 inch for every 20 inches of length. This makes it easier for people using mobility devices to use safely.

Access Aisle

The extra space next to parking spots that gives people using wheelchairs or mobility devices room to get in and out of their vehicles.

Accessible Stall

A large washroom stall with extra room, grab bars, and a door that swings outward, designed for wheelchair users.

Acoustic Treatment

Materials like foam panels or uneven surfaces that are added to walls or ceilings to stop echoes and make sound easier to hear

Bass Traps

Special panels put in corners of a room to soak up low, deep sounds, like kick drums and bass guitars, so the sound is less “boomy.”

Braille Signage

Signs with raised dots that people who are blind can read by feeling them with their fingers.

Built Environment

The places people live, work, and visit that are made by people. This includes buildings, sidewalks, roads, parks, and other spaces. It's everything that is designed and built, not natural, and should be safe and easy for everyone to use.

Clear Floor Space

A big, open area with nothing in the way so people and mobility aids can move around easily.

Edge Lighting

Lights or glowing strips on the edges of ramps, stairs, or stages that make them easier to see in the dark.

Emergency Call System

A button or cord in places like elevators, bathrooms or dressing rooms that people can use to call for help in an emergency.

Flutter Echoes

A sound that bounces back and forth quickly between two hard surfaces, making it hard to hear clearly.

Grab Bars

Strong bars in bathrooms that help people stay balanced or stand up safely.

Handrail Clearance

The space between a handrail and the wall. It should be at least 2 inches so people can grab it without hitting their hands.

Mobility Device

A tool that helps people move if they have trouble walking or standing. Examples include wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, and scooters. People use them to stay safe and comfortable when getting around.

Slip-Resistant Surface

A floor or ramp that has a rough or treated surface to stop people from slipping, especially when it's wet.

Step-Free Path

A pathway with no stairs, so it's easy to use for wheelchairs, strollers, or walkers.

Tactile Ground Indicators

Bumpy or textured surfaces on the ground that help people with vision impairments feel where they are going with their feet or a cane.

Threshold

The edge or bump at the bottom of a doorway. It should be flat or sloped so wheelchairs and mobility devices can cross easily, and people don't trip.

Turning Radius

The amount of space a wheelchair needs to make a U-turn, which is a 180-degree turn. The minimum turning radius for a wheelchair to make a U-turn is 82.7 inches (2100 mm) in diameter.

Visual Contrast Strip

A brightly coloured strip on the edge of stairs or ramps that makes it easier for people with low vision to see where the edge is.

Weather Protection

Covered areas, like roofs or awnings, that keep people and equipment dry in rain or snow.

What is area allowance?

Area allowance means making sure there's enough clear, open space for people with mobility aids (like wheelchairs, scooters, or walkers) to move around and use the space safely and comfortably.

Feature	Minimum Space Required	Why It Matters
Turning Radius	1,500 mm x 1,500 mm (5 ft x 5 ft)	Wheelchair users can turn around fully without bumping into walls or furniture.
Pathways & Hallways	1,200 mm (47 inches) wide	People using mobility aids or two people walking side by side can get through with ease.
Doorways	860 mm (34 inches) wide	Mobility devices like wheelchairs can pass through safely.
Clear Floor Space	800 mm x 1,200 mm	People can approach and use things like sinks or light switches without obstacles.

1.0 Arrival and Parking : On The Road Again

This section is about making sure everyone can get to the venue easily when they park their car or unload equipment. We start by making sure there are enough parking spaces for disabled people, and that the paths to the venue are safe and easy to use. We examine how easy it is for bands and crew to unload equipment.

1.0 Arrival and Parking

1.1 Accessible Parking

Feature	Requirement	Why it Matters
Parking Spots	Designated spots close to the entrance with the wheelchair symbol. At least 8 ft wide and 8 ft deep.	Gives wheelchair users enough space to safely get in and out of their cars.
Access Aisle	At least 6.5 ft wide. At least 9 ft of height clearance.	Provides enough room for wheelchair users to maneuver and accommodates vehicles with lifts or ramps.
Clear Paths	Smooth, stable, slip-resistant, at least 4 ft wide. No steps or obstacles.	So that people using mobility aids can comfortably pass through.

Feature	Requirement	Why it Matters
Ramps	Gentle slope (1:20 ratio). Non-slip surface.	Makes it easier for people using wheelchairs or pushing heavy equipment to navigate changes in ground height.
Drop-Off Area	Designated area near the entrance. Ideally with a roof or cover. At least 10 ft of height clearance.	Helps people who can't walk long distances or need help getting out of a car. Accommodates vehicles with lifts or ramps.

1.0 Arrival and Parking

Load-in Zones: You're Gonna Carry That Weight

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Easy Access	Designated area near the entrance. Ideally a step-free, level path to the entrance that is at least 4 ft wide.	So that people using wheelchairs or carrying equipment can easily access the venue.
Ramps	At least 4 ft wide with a gentle slope (1:20 ratio).	Helps people with mobility aids or heavy equipment navigate changes in ground height.
Smooth and Safe Paths	Well-maintained, smooth paths. Ideally, no obstacles like garbage bins or vehicles.	Makes it easier and safer to move heavy equipment.
Good Lighting	Bright lights, especially for nighttime load-in.	Improves visibility and helps prevent accidents.
Weather Protection	A roof or cover to protect equipment from rain or snow.	Safeguards equipment from weather damage.
Helpful Tools	Carts or dollies available to move heavy equipment.	Makes it easier for everyone to handle heavy items.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Clear Signs	Easy-to-read, well-placed signs directing people to the entrance, stage, and other important places.	Helps people navigate the load-in zone and find their way around the venue.

2.0 Exterior Entrances: Enter Sandman

This section is about making sure the venue's entrances are safe and easy to use. We check if stairs have non-slip surfaces, if doorways are wide enough, and if power-assisted doors stay open long enough for everyone to pass through comfortably.

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.1 Exterior Stairs: Steppin' Out

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Step-Free Path	At least one entrance should be completely step-free, providing an accessible route into the building.	This allows people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids to enter the venue independently.
Step Height	Steps should be no taller than 7 inches (180 mm).	This makes the stairs easier to climb for people with mobility challenges and reduces the risk of trips and falls for everyone.
Step Depth	Steps should be at least 11 inches (280 mm) deep, measured from front to back.	This provides enough space for a secure foothold and makes it easier to place a whole foot on each step.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Non-Slip Surface	Steps should have a non-slip surface, such as textured concrete, rubber treads, or a non-slip coating.	This helps prevent slips and falls, especially in wet or icy conditions.
Visual Contrast Strip	A contrasting color strip should be placed on the edge of each step. The strip should be 2-4 inches (50-100 mm) wide.	This helps people with low vision see where one step ends and the next begins.
Handrails	Handrails should be provided on both sides of the stairs and run the full length of the staircase.	This offers support and stability to people as they climb or descend the stairs.
Handrail Height	Handrails should be positioned between 34 and 36 inches (865-915 mm) above the steps.	This height makes handrails comfortable for most people to grip.
Handrail Design	Handrails should be easy to grip along their entire length. They should have a smooth surface and be free of any protrusions or gaps.	This allows hands to slide easily along the handrail for continuous support.
Clearance Between Handrail and Wall	There should be at least 2 inches (50 mm) of space between the handrail and the wall.	This is so people can grip the handrail comfortably without bumping their knuckles.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Level Landings	Flat, level areas should be provided at the top and bottom of the stairs. These landings should be large enough for a person to stop and turn around.	Landings provide a safe place to rest or change direction, and they are especially important for people using mobility aids who may need more space to maneuver.

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.2 Doorways: Knockin' on My Backdoor

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Door Width	At least 34 inches (860 mm) wide.	Allows wheelchairs and other mobility devices to pass through easily.
Threshold Height	Ideally no more than 0.5 inches (13 mm) high. If higher, it should have beveled edges for smooth transitions.	Minimizes the bump or lip that could make it difficult for wheelchairs or people with mobility impairments to cross.
Step-Free Path	At least one entrance should have a completely step-free path leading to the door.	So that people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids can enter the venue independently without encountering any steps.
Ramps	If there are changes in ground height, ramps should be provided. Ramps should meet the CSA slope standard of 1:20. [see Glossary]	Lets people using wheelchairs or pushing heavy equipment to navigate changes in ground height leading to the entrance.

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.3 Power-Assisted Doors

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Activation Button Height	Buttons should be between 31 and 47 inches (800-1200 mm) high from the floor.	This makes it easy for people of different heights, whether standing or in a wheelchair, to reach and press the button.
Clear Marking	Buttons should be clearly marked with the international symbol of accessibility. They should also have a high-contrast color (like blue on white) for visibility.	This helps everyone, especially people with visual impairments, to easily find and use the button.
Warning Sign	There should be a sign on the door that says "Warning: Automatic Door". The sign should be facing the direction the door swings open.	This lets people know that the door might open suddenly so they can be prepared.
Door Open Time	Doors should stay open for at least 15 seconds once activated.	This gives people enough time to pass through the doorway safely, especially if they are using a wheelchair or walking slowly.
Turning Space	There should be a clear space of at least 59 inches (1500 mm) in front of the door. This allows for a turning radius for wheelchairs.	This gives people using wheelchairs enough space to turn around comfortably and position themselves to go through the doorway.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Clear Path	The path to the door should be free of obstacles.	This makes sure that people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices can easily get to the door without bumping into things.
Accessible Entrance Signage	The accessible entrance should be clearly marked with high-contrast signs. Tactile (touchable) or Braille signs are helpful too.	This helps disabled people easily identify the accessible entrance to the venue.

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.4 Additional Features: All The Small Things

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Good Lighting	The entrance should be well-lit, especially at night.	This makes it easier for everyone to see where they are going and avoid tripping. It's especially helpful for people with low vision.
Weather Protection	A covered area, marquee, or overhang can protect people from rain, snow, or sun.	This keeps people and their musical equipment safe from the elements while waiting to enter the venue.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Slip-Resistant Mats	Mats inside the entrance can prevent slips and falls.	This is important for everyone, especially in wet or icy conditions. Make sure the mats are secured to the floor so they don't move around and cause a hazard.

3.0 Interior Circulation: Round and Round

Interior circulation is how people move around inside a venue. This section looks at how easy it is for everyone to get to different areas, including those who use wheelchairs or have difficulty getting around.

Signage and wayfinding help everyone access spaces like the stage, restrooms, or green room:

- » Signage means putting up signs to show people where to go.
- » Wayfinding makes sure the layout of the venue makes sense, so people don't get lost.

Staircases should be safe and easy for everyone to use. People should be able to see where the step begins and ends and feel like they have secure footing.

Handrails give people something sturdy to grab for balance and support, which helps prevent falls and makes stairs and ramps easier to use, especially for those with mobility challenges.

Landings provide flat, level spaces to rest or turn around, which is important on longer staircases or ramps.

Elevators help people who can't use the stairs. They need to be large enough for a wheelchair and anyone assisting the wheelchair user. Handrails inside provide extra support and balance, and the buttons should be easy to reach and understand.

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.1 Path of Travel: Country Roads, Take Me Home

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Pathway Width	All pathways, including those backstage, should be at least 47 inches (1200 mm) wide. Temporary narrow sections can be 34 inches (860 mm) for up to 2 feet (600 mm).	This gives enough room for people using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids to pass through comfortably. It also makes sure people carrying equipment or instruments have enough space.
Clear of Obstacles	Pathways should be free of obstacles like snake cables, the feet of stand-mounted monitors, large equipment like guitar cabinets, and small pieces of gear like drum sticks or hi-hat stands.	This prevents tripping hazards and allows people using mobility devices to move freely without bumping into things. Cable ramps can be used to cover cables running across pathways.
Step-Free Access	Pathways should be step-free wherever possible.	This makes sure that people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids can travel smoothly without having to navigate steps.
Turning Space	Provide enough space for wheelchairs to turn around comfortably. A minimum of 59 inches (1500 mm) is a good guideline.	This allows people using wheelchairs to maneuver easily, especially in corners or at the end of hallways.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Cable Management	Use cable ramps and a cable management system like surface-mounted raceways, wall-mounted conduits, or baseboard cable channels to run snake cables, XLR's, and power cables.	This helps to keep cables organized and off the floor, reducing tripping hazards. It also makes the space look neater and more professional. It makes a sound technicians job a lot easier to have a tidy workspace.
Adequate Lighting	Backstage pathways should have enough lighting for safety and visibility.	This makes it easier for everyone to see where they are going and avoid accidents.
Tactile Ground Indicators	Consider using tactile ground surface indicators at transitions or areas with hazards.	These are textured surfaces on the floor that can be felt with a cane or foot. They help people with visual impairments to navigate the space safely.

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.2 Signage and Wayfinding: Go Your Own Way

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Types of Signs	Directional, Backstage, Illuminated, Accessible (with wheelchair symbol and Braille)	Help people find important areas, label rooms, and make navigation easier for everyone, especially in low light.
Placement	Place signs at key decision points (entrances, exits, intersections). Face the direction people are walking. Avoid glare and shadows.	Show people where to go and make signs easy to see and use without confusion.
Visibility	Use high-contrast colors, large, easy-to-read sans-serif fonts (14 points minimum), good lighting (at least 200 lx), and matte finishes.	Make signs easy to read, even from far away or in different lighting conditions.
Accessibility	Include tactile features (raised lettering and Braille) for permanent spaces, standard pictograms, and consider multiple formats (visual, tactile, auditory).	Help everyone, including people with visual impairments, get the information they need.
Consistency	Maintain a consistent design, placement, and style for signs throughout the venue.	Help people learn the wayfinding system quickly.

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.3 Interior Staircases: Get On Up

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Step Height	Steps should be no taller than 7 inches (180 mm).	This makes them easier to climb, especially for people who have trouble with stairs.
Slip-Resistant Surface	Steps should have a non-slip surface, like a textured covering or tread.	This helps prevent slips and falls.
Step Depth	The treads (the flat part you step on) should be at least 11 inches (280 mm) deep.	This gives people enough space to place their foot securely.
Contrasting Strip	A strip in a different color should be at the edge of each step. It should be 2-4 inches wide (50-100 mm).	This helps people see the edge of the step, especially those with low vision.
Nosing (Overhang)	The nosing (the part of the step that sticks out over the riser) should stick out no more than 1.5 inches (38 mm).	This prevents people from tripping on the edge of the step.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Open Risers	There should be no open spaces between the steps (no open risers).	This helps prevent people from tripping or catching their foot.
Consistent Step Height and Depth	All steps should be the same height and depth throughout the staircase.	This makes the stairs more predictable and easier to use, especially for people with mobility challenges.
Handrails	Handrails should be on both sides of the staircase. They should be continuous, even around landings (unless interrupted by a door or another path).	Handrails give people something to hold onto for support. They're important for everyone but especially helpful for people with balance issues.
Handrail Height	Handrails should be 34-36 inches (865–915 mm) above the steps.	This height makes them comfortable for most people to hold.
Handrail Gripping Surface	Handrails should be easy to grip along their whole length.	They should be smooth and free of any bumps or interruptions.
Handrail Ending	Handrails should end in a way that doesn't stick out and create a hazard.	They should curve back towards the wall or end smoothly.
Clearance Between	There should be at least 2 inches (50 mm) of space between the handrail and the wall.	This makes it easier for people to grip the handrail without scraping their knuckles.

Feature	Requirement	Why It Matters
Handrail and Wall		
Landings	Landings should be flat and level. They should connect smoothly to the stairs.	This helps prevent tripping. Landings should be big enough for someone to turn around or pause to rest.

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.4 Handrails and Landings: Reach Out (I'll Be There)

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Handrails	On both sides of stairs	Help people keep their balance and prevent falls. Especially important for people who have trouble with stairs!
	Go all the way up and down, even around landings (unless a door is in the way)	Give people something to hold onto the whole time they're on the stairs.
	34-36 inches high (865-915 mm)	Makes them easy to hold for most people.
	Smooth and easy to grip, no bumps or gaps	Lets people slide their hand along the rail without any problems.
	2 inches (50 mm) of space between the handrail and the wall	Gives people enough room to grip the handrail comfortably without hitting the wall.
	Ends smoothly, doesn't stick out	Prevents people from tripping on the end of the handrail and keeps the pathway clear.
Landings	Flat and level	Helps prevent tripping.
	Connect smoothly to the stairs, no bumps or gaps	Makes a smooth transition between the stairs and the landing.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	Big enough for a wheelchair to turn around (at least 59 inches or 1500 mm across)	Gives people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices enough space to move around comfortably.
	At the top and bottom of every staircase	Lets people rest or turn around if needed.
	Wherever there's a change in direction on the stairs	Makes sure there's a safe place to stop and change direction.

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.5 Elevators: Smooth Operator

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Size	At least 6.5 feet wide and 4.5 feet deep.	This gives enough room for a wheelchair to turn around comfortably inside.
Handrails	Installed on three sides, 31.5–36 inches high, with 1 inch of space between rail and wall.	Handrails provide support and help people keep their balance. The space from the wall offers a good grip.
Buttons	No higher than 48 inches from the floor, with Braille labels or nearby Braille signs.	Everyone should be able to reach the buttons easily. Braille helps people who are blind or visually

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
		impaired know what floor they are going to.
Button Signals	Light up or provide a visual signal when pressed.	This confirms that the button has been activated.
Door Safety	Stops if something is in the way.	This prevents the doors from closing on someone or something, keeping everyone safe.
Emergency Call System	Easy to use, with Braille or tactile features and a monitored two-way communication system.	This makes sure that people can call for help in an emergency. The two-way system allows people to talk to someone and get assistance quickly.
Monitoring	The emergency system should be monitored 24/7.	This means that someone is always available to respond to an emergency call.

4.0 Washrooms: Frankie Says Relax

This section looks at the accessibility of both multi-stall and single-stall washrooms. Multi-stall washrooms have multiple stalls for many people to use at once, while single-stall washrooms are designed for one person at a time.

It breaks down key features like doors, sinks, stalls, and grab bars, explaining what they need and why these features matter for safe and easy use by everyone.

4.1 & 4.2 Multi-Occupancy and Single-Occupancy Washrooms: Knock Three Times

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Signage	Clear signs that point the way to the washrooms.	Easy-to-see signs help everyone find the washrooms quickly, especially people who are new to the venue. Using symbols and Braille on signs makes them even more helpful.
Doors	Doors should open easily with minimal force (no more than 5 pounds of pressure) and be at least 34 inches wide.	This makes sure that people with mobility devices, like wheelchairs, can enter easily.
Accessible Stall	Multi-stall washrooms should have at least one stall that's	A larger stall gives people using wheelchairs or other mobility

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	bigger – at least 59 inches wide and 59 inches deep.	devices enough space to move around comfortably.
Stall Door	The stall door should be at least 34 inches wide and swing outward.	An outward-swinging door makes it easier to get in and out of the stall, especially if you're using a wheelchair.
Grab Bars	Grab bars should be installed on the side and back walls of accessible stalls. They should be 29-33 inches high and securely mounted to the wall.	Grab bars help people with balance or mobility challenges to transfer to the toilet, or to sit down and stand up safely. They need to be strong and mounted to the wall, not the stall divider!
Toilet	The toilet should be 17-19 inches high and have a backrest.	A comfortable height and backrest make it easier for everyone to use the toilet, especially those with mobility challenges.
Toilet Accessories	Toilet paper, flush handle, and sanitary disposal bin should be easy to reach from a sitting position.	For example, some people with spinal cord injuries have trouble bending down, or reaching far away. Toilet paper should be easy to pull out.
Sink	The sink should be no higher than 34 inches from the floor and have at least 27 inches of knee clearance underneath.	This allows people in wheelchairs to roll under the sink easily.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Faucets	Faucets should be easy to turn on with one hand or a closed fist.	Lever-style or automatic faucets are the easiest to use, especially for people with limited hand strength or dexterity.
Mirror	The mirror should be low enough for both seated and standing users to see themselves. The bottom edge should be no higher than 39 inches.	Everyone should be able to do a fit check. If the mirror is above the sink, it can be mounted in a way that it is tilted slightly downwards for people in sitting positions to see themselves.
Soap and Towel Dispensers	Dispensers should be easy to reach for everyone.	Mount soap and paper towel dispensers no higher than 47 inches for easy access.
Clear Floor Space	Keep at least 59 inches by 59 inches of open floor space around toilets and sinks.	This makes sure that people using wheelchairs or walkers have enough space to maneuver in both single and multi-stall washrooms.

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces: All the World's a Stage

This section looks at performance and rehearsal spaces to make sure they are accessible and safe for everyone. It covers how performers, including those with mobility challenges, can get on and off the stage, how easy it is to adjust microphones and monitors, and whether stage and audience lighting can be controlled for comfort and safety.

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.1 Stage Access: Rise Above

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Ramps or Lifts	Ramps should be no steeper than a 1:20 slope (1 inch of rise for every 20 inches of length) and at least 47 inches wide. Lifts need to be large enough to fit a wheelchair and any equipment.	This makes sure that people who use wheelchairs or have difficulty with stairs can get onto the stage safely and easily.
Pathways	Pathways on stage should be at least 47 inches wide and free of obstacles like cables or equipment.	This provides enough room for people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids to move around comfortably. It also makes it easier for everyone to carry equipment without tripping or bumping into things.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Stage Surface	The stage surface should be stable and slip-resistant.	This helps prevent slips and falls, especially during performances.
Edges & Stairs	Edges of the stage, stairs, and ramps should be clearly marked with high-contrast paint, tape, or tactile indicators. Use LED strip lights or glow-in-the-dark tape for low-light conditions.	This makes it easier for people with low vision to see or feel where the stage ends and where stairs begin.
Handrails	Stairs leading to the stage should have handrails on both sides, at a height of 34-38 inches.	Handrails provide support for people who have difficulty with balance or walking up and down stairs.

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.2 Mics, Stands, and Monitors: Get A Grip

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Mic Stand Adjustability	Easy to adjust for height and angle. Clutch handles and knobs should be large,	Performers with limited hand strength or mobility need to be able to adjust the mic stand without difficulty. It should also

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	ergonomic, and easy to grip. Smooth adjustment points.	accommodate both seated and standing performers.
Mic Stand Stability	Lightweight but sturdy materials. Stable base to prevent tipping. Counterweight to prevent tipping when the boom arm is extended.	A stable mic stand makes sure that the microphone stays in place and doesn't fall over, even if a performer bumps into it. This is especially important for performers who move around a lot on stage.
Mic Options	Offer both standard boom mics and clip-on or headset microphones.	Clip-on or headset mics allow for hands-free use, which can be helpful for performers who find it difficult to sing in a static position.
Monitor Placement	Position floor wedges so they don't block pathways but are still visible and heard by performers, without blocking their view of the crowd.	Performers need to be able to see and hear their monitor mix without tripping over floor wedges. For audience facing speakers, consider using suspended monitors to keep clear sightlines and avoid obstructing pathways.
Feedback Control	Minimize feedback, especially for performers using hearing aids or cochlear implants.	Feedback can be extremely distracting and even painful for some performers. Carefully position monitors to reduce feedback and work with the sound engineer to ensure a clear monitor mix.

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.3 Stage Lighting: White Light/White Heat

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Lighting Control	A lighting console that can adjust stage lighting for brightness and color.	Allows for adjustments to the lighting levels and colors to suit the needs of different performers. This can help performers with low vision see better or help performers with sensory sensitivities avoid harsh lighting.
Fixture Flexibility	Lighting fixtures that can be adjusted for direction and focus to avoid unwanted shadows.	So that the stage is well-lit and that all performers are clearly visible to the audience. This is especially important for performers who use sign language.
Spotlights	Spotlights that can be aimed at specific areas of the stage, like spaces for ASL interpreters.	Makes sure that interpreters are clearly visible to the audience.
Edge Lighting	Lights that illuminate the edges of the stage, ramps, and stairs, like aisle lighting or built-in step lights.	Makes it easier for performers to see where the stage ends and where stairs begin, reducing the risk of falls. This is especially helpful in low-light conditions like a music venue.
Light Type	Use LED stage lights instead of fluorescent lights.	LED lights don't flicker like fluorescent lights, which can be distracting and

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
		cause sensory issues for some performers.
Glare Reduction	Use adjustable lights, diffusers, or strategic placement to soften the light and reduce glare.	Helps prevent eye strain and makes it easier for performers to see comfortably.

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces: Making the Stage Welcoming

5.4 House Lighting: Fade To Black

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Independent Control	House lights should have a separate control panel that artists or staff can use without needing the lighting technician.	This lets performers to turn on the house lights during the daytime for rehearsals, setting up equipment, or loading in gear without having to rely on a lighting technician. This gives them more independence and flexibility.
Adjustability	House lights should be dimmable (adjustable) for brightness and color tones.	Dimmable house lights allow performers to adjust the lighting levels to suit their needs. This can help performers with low vision see better or help performers with sensory sensitivities avoid harsh lighting.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Control Panel Access	Control panels for house lights should be clearly labeled and placed at a height that's reachable for everyone, including wheelchair users.	This makes it easier for everyone to control the house lights. Panels should be between 15.7 inches and 47.2 inches from the floor.
Task Lighting	Provide task lighting, like clip-on lamps, on stage for musicians to set up their gear or read sheet music.	Task lighting provides extra light in specific areas where performers need it. Make sure controls for task lighting are easy to reach and operate in the same way as other venue controls.

6.0 Sound Check and Signal Processing: Good Vibrations

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs), like In-Ear Monitors (IEMs), helps musicians to hear themselves and their bandmate more clearly by giving them a customized mix so they can play in time and in tune. It covers the features needed for mixing consoles, and onboard or outboard processing.

Signal processing is especially important for IEM users to protect their hearing and to accommodate different spectrums of frequencies that someone might have difficulty hearing, or if hearing too much of a certain frequency is painful or uncomfortable.

Compression is essentially a “volume babysitter.” It is like putting a ceiling on the loud sounds and a floor under the quiet ones. Imagine sound waves as a rollercoaster. Some parts go high (loud sounds) and some dip low (quiet sounds). Compression squashes down the loudest parts (so they don’t crash into the ceiling) and boosts up the quietest parts (bringing them closer to the floor). This creates a more balanced and consistent sound without distortion or potentially dangerous volume spikes.

EQ (Equalization) is like controlling an elevator with three floors. Bass (low frequencies), Midrange, and Treble (high frequencies). You can raise or lower each floor to make the sound more balanced and easier to hear. For someone with hearing loss, adjusting the treble floor might make vocals clearer, while lowering the bass floor could remove muddiness. Since hearing loss can affect how people hear certain frequencies, EQ helps customize the IEM mix to their needs.

EQ comes in two main types: graphic EQ and parametric EQ. Graphic EQ adjusts fixed frequency ranges, like bass, mids, or treble, with simple boost or cut controls. It’s great for quick, general adjustments.

Parametric EQ, on the other hand, is much more precise because it allows you to select the exact frequency to adjust (frequency control), decide how much to boost or cut (gain), and control how wide or narrow the adjustment is (Q, or bandwidth). This makes it ideal for targeting specific problem areas.

6.0 Sound Check and Signal Processing

6.1 Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) and Mixing Board Compatibility: Voices Carry

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Inputs/Outputs	Enough to support all instruments, microphones, and IEM receivers.	Makes sure you have enough connections for everything, especially XLR, TRS, or digital connections.
Dedicated IEM Submix	At least 4 available channels for a separate IEM submix.	Lets you adjust the volume and mix for the IEMs independently from what the audience hears.
Signal Processing	Processors for gain, EQ, and dynamics control on each channel and the submix. A 3-band EQ is a good start while parametric EQ is most ideal.	Lets you fine-tune the sound going to the IEMs, for clarity and balance for each musician.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Subgroups/Routing	Ability to create and route subgroups to both the main output and IEM submix.	Flexibility for controlling different instrument groups in both the main and IEM mixes.
Mute Groups/Solo	Mute groups and solo functions.	Makes it easier to isolate specific instruments or groups for quick adjustments during sound checks and performances.
Metering	Clear, easy-to-read metering for both the main output and the IEM submix.	Helps the sound engineer monitor levels and prevent distortion or clipping.
Personal Mixers	Integration for musicians' personal mixers to chain to the main board.	Lets musicians customize their own IEM mix, giving them control over their individual sound preferences.
IEM Outputs	Clear labels and easy access to the IEM outputs.	Simplifies setup and troubleshooting, especially when connecting and disconnecting equipment.
Wireless Interference	Systems to reduce wireless interference, like frequency coordination tools or dedicated frequency bands.	Makes sure there is a clear, reliable wireless signal transmission for IEMs, especially in environments with lots of wireless devices.

IEM System Types

Wireless: These are the most common systems, using radio frequencies to transmit sound. You need to scan for the best channel to avoid interference from other devices. Many IEM receivers have built-in channel scanning for easy setup.

Wired: These are a more affordable option for musicians who stay in one spot, like drummers. A basic setup requires a headphone amplifier with a direct input (XLR or 1/4 inch).

IEM Earbud Considerations

The number of drivers in the earbuds affects the **clarity and separation** of different frequencies (lows, mids, highs). More drivers generally mean better sound quality, but the cost increases as well.

7.0 Acoustic Treatment: The Sound Of Silence

Acoustic treatment is all about making a space sound clear and comfortable for everyone. It's adding special materials to a room to control how sound waves travel so they don't bounce around too much. Imagine throwing a ball against a hard wall - it bounces right back! But if you throw it against a soft pillow, it doesn't bounce as much. Acoustic treatment is similar in that it helps absorb or diffuse sound so the room doesn't sound echoey or too loud. By using a combination of sound absorption and diffusion, you can create an acoustic environment that is balanced, comfortable, and supports clear communication and enjoyable listening experiences. Good acoustics can help make music sound better and improve the listening experience for people with hearing loss.

7.0 Acoustic Treatment

7.1 Sound Absorption and Diffusion: Echo Beach

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Absorption Panels	Materials like foam, fiberglass, or mineral wool panels placed on walls and ceilings.	These materials soak up sound waves, especially higher frequencies. This helps reduce echo and reverb, making it easier to hear conversations and music clearly. Absorption is essential for reducing flutter echoes (those quick, repetitive echoes) and for taming bright-sounding or "ringy" rooms.
Bass Traps	Special panels designed to absorb low-	Bass traps help control the low-end frequencies, making the sound less boomy

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	frequency sound waves, often placed in corners where bass tends to build up.	and more balanced. This is especially important in smaller rooms where bass frequencies can be a problem. Bass traps are a type of absorption specifically designed to absorb low-frequency energy.
Diffusers	Materials with uneven surfaces, often made of wood or plastic, placed on walls or ceilings.	Diffusers scatter sound waves, preventing them from bouncing back in one direction. This helps create a more natural and spacious sound, reducing the "dead" feeling that can sometimes happen with too much absorption. Diffusion is commonly made of wood, plastic, or even polystyrene.
Strategic Placement	Consider the size and shape of the room, the types of activities happening in the space, and the specific sound issues present.	Careful placement of acoustic treatment is key to achieving the best results. For example, placing bass traps in corners helps target low-frequency build-up, while adding diffusion to the back wall can create a sense of spaciousness.

8.0 Backstage and Green Rooms: Knockin' On My Backdoor

8.0 Backstage and Green Rooms

8.1 Rest and Recharge: Golden Slumbers

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Pathways	Clear, wide, and free of obstacles, at least 47 inches wide.	So wheelchairs and other mobility devices can move around easily.
Turning Space	Open spaces at least 59 inches wide where pathways change direction.	So people using mobility devices can turn around comfortably.
Seating	A variety of chairs with different features: armrests, adjustable heights, lumbar support, and recliners for elevating legs.	Gives comfortable options for everyone, including those with mobility impairments or who need to rest their legs.
Tables and Counters	Height of about 34 inches with at least 27 inches of knee space underneath.	Makes it easy for people in wheelchairs to use the tables and counters.
Mirrors	Placed so people of different heights can use them, both	Everyone should be able to see themselves in the mirror, regardless

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	sitting and standing. Tilted mirrors work best.	of their height or whether they are using a wheelchair.
Storage	Coat hooks, lockers, and shelves at different heights. Strong hooks for heavy bags and mobility aids.	Makes it easy for people of all heights to reach storage spaces. Strong hooks help people store their mobility aids safely or access the contents of their bags without worrying about dropping it.
Charging Stations	Outlets at accessible heights (between 31-47 inches). A variety of charging options like USB hubs, wireless pads, and portable chargers. Charging docks for mobility aids.	For people to charge their devices and mobility aids easily. Different options accommodate a range of devices.
Lighting	House lights that can be controlled independently and adjusted for brightness and color.	Performers can set the lighting to their preference. Adjustable lighting can help performers with low vision or sensory sensitivities. Task lighting, like clip-on lamps, can provide extra light where needed.

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation: Under Pressure

Backstage areas can be busy and sometimes dangerous. It's important to make sure everyone stays safe, especially during emergencies. Harm reduction means taking steps to prevent accidents and make sure people are safe, even if they are taking risks.

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.1 Harm Reduction: With A Little Help From My Friends

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Sharps Disposal	Special containers for needles and other sharp objects. Mounted securely at a height that's easy to reach in bathrooms, dressing rooms, and other areas.	Prevents accidental needle sticks and the spread of infections. Secure mounting keeps containers from falling and prevents unauthorized access.
Naloxone Kits	Kits with medicine to reverse opioid overdoses. Easily accessible to staff in case of emergency.	Opioids are powerful painkillers that can be dangerous if misused. Naloxone can save lives in case of an overdose.
First Aid Kits	Well-stocked first aid kits with bandages, antiseptic wipes,	Makes sure basic first aid supplies are available for minor injuries and emergencies. Stored in clear

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	pain relievers, and other supplies.	containers that are easy for staff to find and reach.
Safety Training	Training for staff on how to use naloxone, provide first aid, and respond to emergencies.	Makes sure staff are prepared to handle emergencies and keep everyone safe.
Safe Storage	Store equipment and supplies safely to prevent accidents. Make sure heavy items are stored on lower shelves.	Prevents injuries from falling objects.
Emergency Contacts	Post emergency contact information in a visible location.	Makes it easy for anyone to call for help in case of an emergency.
Security	Secure backstage areas to prevent unauthorized access. Consider using security personnel or controlled access points.	Protects performers and their belongings. Controlled access can help prevent the introduction of drugs and other harmful substances.

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.2 First Aid: Fix Me

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Location	First aid kits should be easy to find backstage, onstage, and anywhere else accidents might happen.	If someone gets hurt, you need to be able to get to the first aid kit quickly!
Storage	Kits should be kept in clear containers that are easy to see and reach, ideally mounted on a wall at a height that works for everyone.	Clear containers let you see what's inside without opening them. The right height means everyone, even people in wheelchairs, can reach the kit easily.
Contents	Kits should be fully stocked with bandages, antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, and other important supplies.	You need to be ready for all kinds of minor injuries, like cuts, scrapes, and burns.
Maintenance	Someone needs to check and restock the kits regularly to make sure everything is there and hasn't expired.	Expired medicine can be dangerous! Regular checks ensure the kit is always ready to use.
Training	Staff should be trained in basic first aid so they know how to help someone who is hurt.	Knowing basic first aid can help someone feel better and prevent a minor injury from getting worse. In a serious emergency, it might even save a life!

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.3 Evacuation Plans: Escape (The Piña Colada Song)

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Easy to Find	Evacuation plans need to be posted in spots where people can easily see them. Think near doors, in hallways, and backstage.	In an emergency, you don't want to waste time hunting for the plan!
Easy to Read	The plans should be printed big enough for everyone to read (at least size 14 font). They should also use simple words and pictures.	This makes it easier for everyone, especially folks who have trouble reading or understanding lots of words.
Everyone Included	The plans should show how to help disabled people get out safely.	It's important to remember that some people might need extra help getting out. This could include folks who use wheelchairs or have other needs.
Different Ways to Learn	It's helpful to have the plan in different ways, like raised-print maps people can feel or large-print versions.	This makes sure that everyone, even those who can't see well, can understand the plan.

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.4 Emergency Exits: Gimme Shelter

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Clear Markings	Exits should be marked with bright signs that are easy to spot, even in the dark.	No one should have to guess where the exit is. Bright lights can help people find the exit in case of a fire with a lot of smoke.
Wide Doors	Doors should be at least 860 mm (34 inches) wide to let wheelchairs and other mobility devices through. There shouldn't be any big bumps on the floor (thresholds).	This makes sure everyone can get through the doors quickly and easily without getting trapped.
Easy-Open Doors	Door handles should be easy to use, even if you only have one hand. Think of handles that are bars or levers you can push down. Doors must unlock easily from inside.	This way, people with limited hand strength or dexterity can still open the doors without struggling. No one should get trapped because they can't unlock or open a door.
Clear Paths	The way to the exits needs to be clear of things like furniture, cords, or bumps in the floor. Paths need to be wide, at least 1200 mm (47 inches).	A clear path means people can get to the exit fast without tripping or getting stuck.
Safe Ramps	Ramps leading to exits should have handrails to help people keep their balance, and non-slip	Ramps make it easier for people who can't use stairs. They need to be safe and easy to use.

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
	surfaces to prevent falls. Ramps can't be too steep!	
Waiting Spots	If there are spots where people who can't use stairs have to wait for help, those spots need to be easy to find and marked clearly.	Waiting areas are important for people who need assistance. They need to have enough room for everyone, including people who use wheelchairs.

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.5 Communication: More Than Words

Feature	What It Needs	Why It Matters
Alarms for Everyone	Music venues should have alarms that use both sound AND flashing lights.	This way, people who can't hear the sound will still know there's an emergency.
Clear Signs	Signs should be bright, easy to see, and use pictures so everyone knows what they mean.	Easy-to-understand signs help people quickly figure out where to go and what to do, even if they are panicking or don't speak the language.
Helping Those in Need	Music venues should have a plan for helping disabled people during an evacuation. Staff should know how to help and where to find important equipment.	This makes sure no one is left behind or forgotten. Having trained staff and accessible equipment makes a huge difference!
Accessible Security	Security gates or turnstiles need to be accessible. If not, there should be another way for disabled people to get through.	Security measures shouldn't stop people from getting out safely. Everyone needs a clear path to the exit.
Guiding Features	It's helpful to have things like raised markings or textures on the floor, or Braille, to help people find the exits.	These features are especially helpful for people who can't see well. They can feel their way to the exit, even in the dark.

1B. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT TOOL

[[Click Here to download the printable version of the Audit Tool](#)]

1.0 Arrival and Parking

1.1 Accessible Parking

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there designated accessible parking spaces with the international symbol of accessibility clearly marked?
1a.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are parking spaces and surrounding areas at least 2100mm x 2100mm, (82.7 inches x 82.7 inches) to allow wheelchair users enough space to safely transfer from their car to their wheelchair?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a step-free path connecting the parking spaces to the main entrance?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the paths clear of debris or uneven surfaces, and are they well-lit?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there ramps or curb cuts where the ground level changes?

5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a drop-off area near an accessible entrance?
5a.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the drop-off area have shelter to keep people and their music gear out of bad weather?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the accessible parking spaces and drop-off areas clearly marked with easy-to-see signs?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there directional signs showing the way from the parking area to the accessible entrances?

1.0 Arrival and Parking

1.2 Load-In Zones

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a designated load-in zone for artists near the venue entrance?
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2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the load-in zone have a step-free route to
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there ramps or lifts to handle changes in the ground height between the load-in zone and the venue pathways?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the ramps have a gentle slope that is no steeper than 1:20? This ratio means for every 20 inches of ramp length, the height increases by only 1 inch.
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the ramps at least 1200 mm (47 inches) wide?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the paths from the load-in area to the entrance wide enough (at least 1200 mm / 47 inches) and free of obstacles like garbage bins or parked vehicles?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the paths smooth and well-maintained, so they are easy to use with mobility devices or for rolling hea
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are handcarts, dollies, or wagons available to help artists load their gear in and out?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there clear signs or directions to guide artists from the load-in zone to the venue entrance?

10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the load-in zone well-lit so people can easily navigate at night?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the load-in zone have weather protection, like an awning or a marquee to keep gear safe in bad weather?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

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2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.1 Exterior Stairs-

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least one entrance to the building with a step-free path for accessibility?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	In the presence of stairs, are the steps no taller than 180 mm (7 inches) to make them comfortable for most people to use?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the steps have a non-slip surface to help prevent slips or falls?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the steps at least 280 mm (11 inches) deep from front to back, giving enough space for a secure foothold?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a visual strip in a contrasting colour on the edge of each step to help people see where one step ends and the next begins?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do handrails run the full length of the stairs on both sides for support?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the handrails positioned at a height between 865 mm and 915 mm (34–36 inches), making them comfortable for most people to hold?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the handrails easy to grip along their entire length?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the handrails have a smooth ending with no parts sticking out into the pathway?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least 50 mm (2 inches) of space between the handrails and the wall so they can be gripped securely without bumping knuckles?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there flat, level areas at the top and bottom of the stairs that are large enough for someone to stop, rest, or turn around if needed?

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.2 Doorways

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the entrance door at least 860 mm (34 inches) wide?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the threshold height no higher than 13 mm (0.5 inches)?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If it's more than 6 mm, does it have beveled edges that wheels can easily roll over?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least one entrance with a step-free path?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there ramps for elevation changes and do they have a gentle slope that is no steeper than 1:20? (This ratio means for every 20 inches of ramp length, the height increases by only 1 inch)

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.3 Power Assisted Doors

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If there are power-assisted doors, are the operational control buttons at a height that's easy to reach (800-1,200 mm / 31 inches - 47 inches)
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a warning sign on the door that alerts people that the door is electric and can open without warning?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the warning sign placed facing the direction that the door swings outwards?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are operational control buttons clearly marked with high contrast blue paint depicting the international symbol of accessibility?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the button in good condition (no chipped or worn paint)?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the doors stay open for at least 15 seconds to allow safe passage?

7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the entrance have a turning radius of at least 1,500 mm (59 inches) to provide enough clear space for a wheelchair user to press the button without having to back up or change positions to get out of the way of the door?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the paths to the door clear of obstacles, like handrails or other objects sticking out?
1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the accessible entrance clearly marked with high-contrast, tactile (touchable), or Braille signs?

2.0 Exterior Entrances

2.4 Additional Features

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the entrance well-lit so it's easy to see, especially in low-light conditions?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the entrance have a covered area, marquee or overhang to keep artists and their equipment safe from bad weather?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there slip-resistant floor mats inside the entrance?

4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the mats secured to the floor?
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Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.1 Path of Travel

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the floors stable and slip-resistant?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all pathways, including backstage routes at least 1,200 mm (47 inches) wide?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are they free of obstacles like loose cables or gear like guitar amps?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the pathways step-free?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there enough turning space (1,500 mm / 59 inches) for mobility devices?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there cable ramps for cabling that runs across pathways
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a cable management system in place, like surface-mounted cable raceways, wall-mounted conduits, or baseboard cable channels, to organize and secure cables along walls, edges, or floors?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do pathways backstage have enough lighting for safety and visibility?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there tactile ground surface indicators used at transitions or areas with hazards?

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.2 Signage and Wayfinding

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are directional signs placed along pathways to show important areas like the stage, green room, and washrooms?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do directional signs use high-contrast colours, like white text on a black background, and large, sans-serif fonts for readability from at least 3 metres (10 feet) away?

3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Include tactile features, like raised lettering and Braille, near the bottom edge for permanent rooms and spaces?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are mounted at a height that's easy to see and reach (1,200–1,500 mm or 47–59 inches from the floor) and placed to avoid glare or shadow?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Have a matte surface or matte lamination to reduce glare?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If temporary, are easy to read with clear text and high contrast?

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.3 Interior Staircases

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do you have one or more interior staircases?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the steps no taller than 180 mm (7 inches)?

3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do they have slip-resistant surfaces?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the treads at least 280 mm (11 inches) deep, measured from front to back?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Partial	Is there a strip at the edge of each step that is 50-100 mm (2-4 inches) wide in a color that stands out from the rest of the step?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the nosing (overhanging front edge of the step) stick out no more than 38 mm (1.5 inches)?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there no open spaces between the steps (no open risers)?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all steps the same height and depth throughout the staircase?

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.4 Handrails and Landings

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are handrails easy to grip continuously along their entire length?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the handrails either round or square in shape?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the handrails placed 865–915 mm (34–36 inches) above the steps?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the handrails end in a way that doesn't block the path or create hazards?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least 50 mm (2 inches) of space between the handrails and the wall to allow a comfortable grip without scraping knuckles?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do landings have enough space for someone to turn around or go back down the stairs?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are landings flat and connect smoothly to the stairs without any gaps or bumps?

3.0 Interior Circulation

3.5 Elevators

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do you have one or more elevators?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the elevator at least 2,000 mm (6.5 feet) wide and 1,370 mm (4.5 feet) deep?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are handrails installed at a height of 800–915 mm (31.5–36 inches) from the floor?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least 25 mm (1 inch) of space between the handrails and the wall?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do handrails run continuously along three sides of the elevator?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the elevator buttons no higher than 1,220 mm (48 inches) from the floor?

7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do all buttons include Braille labels or have Braille signage nearby?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the buttons light up or give a visual signal when pressed?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the elevator door stop if something is in its way?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the emergency call system easy to use, with Braille or tactile features and a monitored two-way communication system?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the two-way communication system monitored 24/7?

4.0 Washrooms

4.0 Washrooms

4.1 Multi-Occupancy Washrooms

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there directional signs to guide users to the washrooms?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all bathroom doors easy to open with minimal force (no more than 22 N or 5 lbs.)?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a power-assisted door? [See Section 2.3 for specifications on power-assisted doors]
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there an accessible stall?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the accessible stall have a clear floor space of at least 1,500 mm x 1,500 mm (59 inches x 59 inches)?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the stall door at least 860 mm (34 inches) wide, and does it swing outward or provide enough maneuvering space?

7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are grab bars installed on the side (L-shaped) and rear walls of the stall at a height of 750-850 mm (29-33 inches)?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there at least 38 mm (1.5 inches) of space between the grab bars and the wall for a secure and easy grip?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the grab bars securely mounted to hold a load of at least 1.3 kN (292 lbs.) ie. not attached to the stall dividers?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	In any type of stall, is the toilet paper, flushing mechanism, and sanitary disposal bin reachable from a sitting position on the toilet without requiring bending or twisting?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the toilet have a backrest to provide support, or is it designed to be securely mounted against a wall so users can lean back comfortably?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the sink outside the stall positioned no higher than 850 mm (34 inches) from the floor, with a knee clearance (pull-under space) of at least 680 mm (27 inches)?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can you turn on the tap with one hand or a closed fist without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting?
14.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the pipes under the sink enclosed, insulated, or set up to redirect hot water to prevent burns, especially in the pull-under space for wheelchair users?

15.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, and other bathroom accessories positioned within easy reach?
16.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a mirror that can be used by both seated and standing users, with the bottom edge no higher than 1,000 mm (39 inches)?
17.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If the mirror is above a sink, is it slanted at a downwards angle?

4. Washrooms

4.2 Single-Occupancy Washrooms

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there directional signs to guide users to the washroom?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a power-assisted door? [See Section 2.3 for specifications on power-assisted doors]
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all doors easy to open with minimal force (no more than 22 N or 5 lbs.)?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the door threshold at least 860 mm (34 inches) wide, and does it swing outward or provide enough maneuvering space?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a clear floor space of at least 1,500 mm x 1,500 mm (59 inches x 59 inches) outside the stall for maneuvering?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are grab bars installed near the entrance or adjacent to the door at a height of 750-850 mm (29-33 inches)?
7.	☐ Yes	Is there at least 38 mm (1.5 inches) of space between the grab bars and the wall for a secure and easy grip?

	☐ No ☐ Partial	
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the grab bars securely mounted to hold a load of at least 1.3 kN (292 lbs.)?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the toilet paper, flushing mechanism, and sanitary disposal bin reachable from a sitting position on the toilet without requiring bending or twisting?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the toilet have a backrest to provide support, or is it designed to be securely mounted against a wall so users can lean back comfortably?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the sink positioned no higher than 850 mm (34 inches) from the floor, with a knee clearance (pull-under space) of at least 680 mm (27 inches)?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can you turn on the tap with one hand or a closed fist without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the pipes under the sink enclosed, insulated, or set up to redirect hot water to prevent burns, especially in the pull-under space for wheelchair users?
14.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, and other bathroom accessories positioned within easy reach from a seated position?

15.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a mirror that can be used by both seated and standing users, with the bottom edge no higher than 1,000 mm (39 inches)?
16.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If the mirror is above a sink, is it slanted at a downwards angle?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

[illegible]

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.1 Stage Access

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are ramps, lifts, or other accessible ways available to get onto the stage?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do ramps meet the CSA slope standard of 1:20 (This ratio means for every 20 inches of ramp length, the height increases by only 1 inch) and have a clear width of at least 1,200 mm (47 inches)?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are pathways on the stage wide enough (at least 1,200 mm or 47 inches) to fit mobility devices?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are pathways free of obstructions, like cables, drumsticks, or gear leaning against the wall?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the stage surface stable and slip-resistant to reduce the risk of falls?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there any tripping hazards, like uneven floor surfaces, gaps, or loose boards?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the edges of the stage, stairs, and ramps marked with high contrast colour paint, tape, or tactile indicators?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are LED strip lights, glow-in-the-dark tape or reflective materials used to make stage edges visible in low-light conditions?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do stairs or steps to the stage have handrails on both sides at an accessible height (865-965 mm / 34-38 inches)?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the stairs have a slip-resistant covering like carpet or rubber nosing?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are stair nosings clearly marked with high contrast colours to make step edges easy to see?

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.2 Mics, Stands and Monitors

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the boom mic stand intuitive and easy to adjust?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the mic stand's materials lightweight but sturdy for frequent use?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are clutch handles and tension knobs large, ergonomic, and easy to grip to be usable by people with limited strength, dexterity, or mobility?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are they coated with a silicon or rubber non-slip and soft-touch coating?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are adjustment points smooth and require minimal force to operate?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can you make height and angle adjustments with a single hand?

7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the mic stand adjust to a range of heights for both seated and standing performers?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the boom arm adjustable in length and angle?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a counterweight to prevent tipping when the boom arm is extended at its maximum point?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the stand's base stable enough to prevent tipping when making adjustments?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are clip-on or headset microphones available for hands-free use?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are floor wedges placed so they don't block pathways but can still be seen and heard by performers?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are monitors positioned to minimize feedback issues, particularly for hearing aid users or those with cochlear implants?
14.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are stand-mounted or suspended monitors set up to keep clear sightlines between performers and the audience, without getting in the way of mobility devices or seated artists?

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.3 Stage Lighting

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the venue's control booth or room have a lighting console that can adjust stage lighting for brightness (dimming) and different colour tones?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can stage lighting fixtures be adjusted for direction and focus to avoid unwanted shadows?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are spotlights available that can be aimed at specific areas, like spaces for ASL interpreters?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the edges of the stage, ramps, and stairs lit up with aisle lighting or built-in step lights (like recessed stair lights or under-step lighting)?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the venue avoid using fluorescent lights and use LED stage lights instead to prevent flicker and sensory issues?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there a way to avoid glare on stage, like using adjustable lights, diffusers, or thoughtful placement to soften the light?

5.0 Performance and Rehearsal Spaces

5.4 House Lighting

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the house lights controlled by an independent panel that is accessible to artists or staff for daytime use, rehearsals, load-in, without requiring the lighting technician's console or presence of a lighting tech?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the house lights dimmable (adjustable) for brightness (dimming) and colour tones?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the house light control panels clearly labeled and placed where wheelchair users or people of different heights can reach them? (Between 400 mm and 1200 mm or 15.7 inches to 47.2 inches from the floor.)
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is task lighting like clip-on lamps provided on stage for musicians to set up their gear or read sheet music?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are controls for task lighting easy to reach and consistent with how other venue controls operate?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

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6.0 Sound Check and Signal Processing

6.1 Assistive Listening Devices

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) readily available?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are they easy to integrate and connect to the existing sound system?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is ALD setup compatible with both wireless and traditional hearing aids?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are charging stations for ALDs easily accessible and located in a barrier-free area?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the mixing board have enough inputs and outputs (XLR, TRS, or digital like AES/EBU or Dante) to support In-Ear Monitors (IEMs)?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there at least 4 available channels on the mixing board to create a dedicated submix for in-ear monitors (IEMs) and route individual instruments or vocals?

7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are onboard or outboard processors available to independently control gain, EQ (with at least 3 bands for highs, mids, and lows), and dynamics like compressors or limiters for each channel and the IEM submix?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the board support creating and independently routing subgroups to both the main output and IEM submix?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are mute groups or solo functions available to make quick adjustments during a performance?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there clear, easy-to-read visible metering options (like VU meters or peak meters) for the main output and IEM submix?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can a musicians' personal mixers chain to the main board using a stage box or digital snake?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are IEM outputs clearly labeled and easy to access for setup and troubleshooting?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there systems in place to reduce wireless interference for IEMs, like frequency coordination tools or dedicated frequency bands?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

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7.0 Acoustic Treatment

7.0 Acoustic Treatment

7.1 Sound Absorption and Diffusion

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the venue have sound-absorbing materials like acoustic panels, curtains, or carpets to help reduce echo, reverb, and other sound reflections that make it harder to hear conversations or performances?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are they placed on walls, ceilings, or floors in a way that helps manage unwanted sound reflections effectively?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there sound diffusers installed to spread sound waves more evenly, preventing areas with too much echo, reverb, or other sound issues?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there places in the venue, like stairwells, hallways, or open spaces, where echo, reverb, or other sound reflections make it difficult to hear clearly, showing a need for better acoustic treatment?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

8.0 Backstage and Green Rooms

8.0 Backstage and Green Rooms

8.1 Rest and Recharge

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the backstage pathways clear and wide enough (at least 1200 mm or 47 inches) for wheelchair users and people with mobility aids to pass through?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there enough turning space backstage (at least 1500 mm or 59 inches wide) for people using wheelchairs or mobility devices to move comfortably?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the green room have different seating options, like chairs with armrests, adjustable heights, or lumbar support?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there places to lie down or elevate legs, like recliners or padded benches?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are benches sturdy, stable, and have non-slip surfaces for safety?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are makeup and dressing room tables set at a height that works for both seated and standing users, with enough knee clearance underneath for wheelchair users (around 850 mm or 34 inches high with 680 mm or 27 inches of knee space)?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are mirrors placed so they're usable for people of different heights, whether sitting or standing? A tilted mirror could make this easier.
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are tissues, sanitizer, hairbrushes and other accessories stored within easy reach on the tables or nearby shelves?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are coat hooks, lockers, and storage spaces placed at different heights for people with varying reach ranges?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there strong hooks for hanging heavy bags or mobility aids like crutches or walkers?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are power outlets and charging stations at a height that's easy to reach (between 800 -1200 mm or 31 - 47 inches)?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the green room offer options like USB hubs, wireless charging pads, or portable chargers?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there charging docks for mobility aids like wheelchairs or scooters?

8.0 Backstage and Green Rooms

8.2 Lighting, Acoustics and Air Quality

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can the lighting in the green room be dimmed or adjusted to create a sensory-friendly space?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there task lights in areas where performers might need extra light for setting up equipment or reading?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the walls and ceilings in the green room designed to reduce noise, echo and reverb, with absorptive acoustic paneling or diffusive elements?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are floors in the green room covered with sound-dampening materials like carpets or rubber mats?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the doors soundproof or insulated to block outside noise?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is the HVAC system quiet enough to avoid adding unnecessary noise?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there good airflow and ventilation to keep the space comfortable?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are air purifiers available to help improve air quality for people sensitive to irritants?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

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9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.1 Harm Reduction

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are sharps disposal bins set up in accessible spots backstage and onstage, like bathrooms, dressing rooms, or other areas where needles might be used?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the bins mounted securely at a height that's easy to reach for wheelchair users or people of different heights (800-1200 mm or 31.5-47.2 inches)?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the bins clearly labeled with a biohazard symbol and simple instructions, so everyone knows what they're for and how to use them?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the bins emptied and safely disposed of on a regular schedule by a qualified service?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are naloxone kits easily accessible to staff in case of an emergency?

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff aware of the location of the naloxone kits and trained on how to use them?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there clear signage indicating the location of the naloxone kits?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the kits stored in a way that protects them from damage or tampering, while still being quickly accessible in an emergency?

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.2 First Aid

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are first aid kits easy to find backstage, onstage, and in other important areas where accidents might happen?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the kits stored in clear, accessible cabinets or containers that people can quickly spot in an emergency?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the kits mounted at a height that's easy to reach for wheelchair users or people of different heights (800-1200 mm or 31.5-47.2 inches)?

4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the kits regularly checked and restocked to make sure they're fully stocked, and supplies aren't expired?
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9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.3 Evacuation Plans

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there clear evacuation plans posted throughout the venue, showing the routes to exits, like handy maps?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are these evacuation plans mounted at a height that's easy to read for people using wheelchairs or of different heights, around 1500 mm or 59 inches from the floor?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are these plans printed in a font size that's easy to read, at least 14 points?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are alternative formats, like tactile maps or large print versions, available for people with visual impairments to make sure everyone can access these plans?

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.4 Emergency Exits

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there enough exits, and are they easy to find and clearly marked?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all pathways to the exits free of anything blocking them and wide enough for people to get through easily?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are the floors and pathways to the exits smooth, slip-resistant, and safe to walk on?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there any tripping hazards, like cords, uneven floors, or things sticking out from walls?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If there are ramps, are they no steeper than 1:20? (This ratio means for every 20 inches of ramp length, the height increases by only 1 inch) and are they easy to use with handrails and non-slip surfaces?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are all doors along exit routes wide enough (at least 860 mm or 34 inches) for wheelchairs or mobility aids?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do doors have handles that are easy to use with one hand, and easily operable with a closed fist, like push bars or levers?

8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Can all doors on exit routes be unlocked and opened quickly in an emergency?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	If there are fire doors, do they close on their own and latch properly, with nothing blocking them?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do emergency lights turn on if the power goes out, and are they bright enough to light up all exit routes and waiting areas?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there designated waiting areas (refuge areas) for people who can't use stairs during an evacuation?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are these waiting areas clearly marked and easy to find?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Is there enough space in the waiting areas for wheelchairs or mobility devices to turn around (at least 1500 mm or 59 inches)?

9.0 Safety and Emergency Evacuation

9.5 Communication

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the waiting areas have a working phone or communication system to call for help?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there fire alarms that everyone can hear if there's an emergency?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there visual alarms (like flashing lights) to help people who can't hear the alarms?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are both the sound and flashing alarms placed where they're easy to notice in all areas, including common rooms and bathrooms?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are exit signs bright, easy to see, and designed to stand out from the background, even in low light or emergency lighting?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does the venue have an evacuation plan that includes steps for helping disabled people?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff trained on how to help disabled people during an evacuation?

8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are security systems like gates or turnstiles accessible for disabled people? If not, are there other ways for them to get through?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are there visual or tactile cues, like raised markings, textured surfaces, or Braille, to guide people along evacuation routes?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

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Module 2: The Adaptive Environment

2A. The Adaptive Environment Audit Tool

Here are some example questions to think about. They're meant to help you reflect on the topics in this section and consider how they might apply to your venue or event. Use them as a starting point to guide your planning and decision-making. The companion guide that follows includes real-life examples, scenarios, actionable steps, and helpful resources to support you in addressing these questions effectively.

Accommodating Indigenous Smudging Ceremonies

1. Does the venue provide a safe and ventilated area for smudging?
2. Are staff trained in cultural safety for Indigenous practices?

Amplifying African-Nova Scotian Voices

3. Are there partnerships with African-Nova Scotian artists and organizations?
4. Does your programming include diverse representation?

Barriers to Hiring Immigrant Artists

5. Are hiring policies designed to be inclusive for immigrant artists?
6. Are translation services available for application or onboarding processes?

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Cultural Bias in Staff and Artist Relations

- 7. Are there measures in place to address unconscious bias among staff?
- 8. Does your venue offer anti-bias training?

Accessible Load-in Zones and Backline

- 9. Are load-in zones wheelchair accessible?
- 10. Is the backline equipment adaptable for disabled artists?

All-Gender Facilities

- 11. Does the venue offer all-gender washrooms and dressing rooms?
- 12. Are signs clear and inclusive?

Sensory-Inclusive Backstages

- 13. Are there sensory-friendly areas backstage?
- 14. Is lighting and sound adjustable for sensory needs?

Air Quality and Scent-Free Policies

- 15. Are scent-free policies clearly communicated to staff and guests?
- 16. Is the venue equipped with proper ventilation?

DeafSpace Communication Design

- 17. Are visual signals used to enhance communication for Deaf performers?
- 18. Are interpreters available upon request?

On-Stage Navigation for Blind or Low-Vision Musicians

- 19. Is tactile flooring available on stage?
- 20. Are cables and equipment marked with tactile indicators?

Green Rooms for Artists with Chronic Pain

- 21. Are green rooms equipped with comfortable seating?
- 22. Is the space accessible for mobility aids?

Mixing In-Ear Monitors for Hard-of-Hearing Musicians

- 23. Does the audio setup include options for hard-of-hearing musicians?
- 24. Are audio technicians trained in accessible monitor mixing?

Food and Beverage Hospitality

- 25. Are dietary needs considered in hospitality riders?

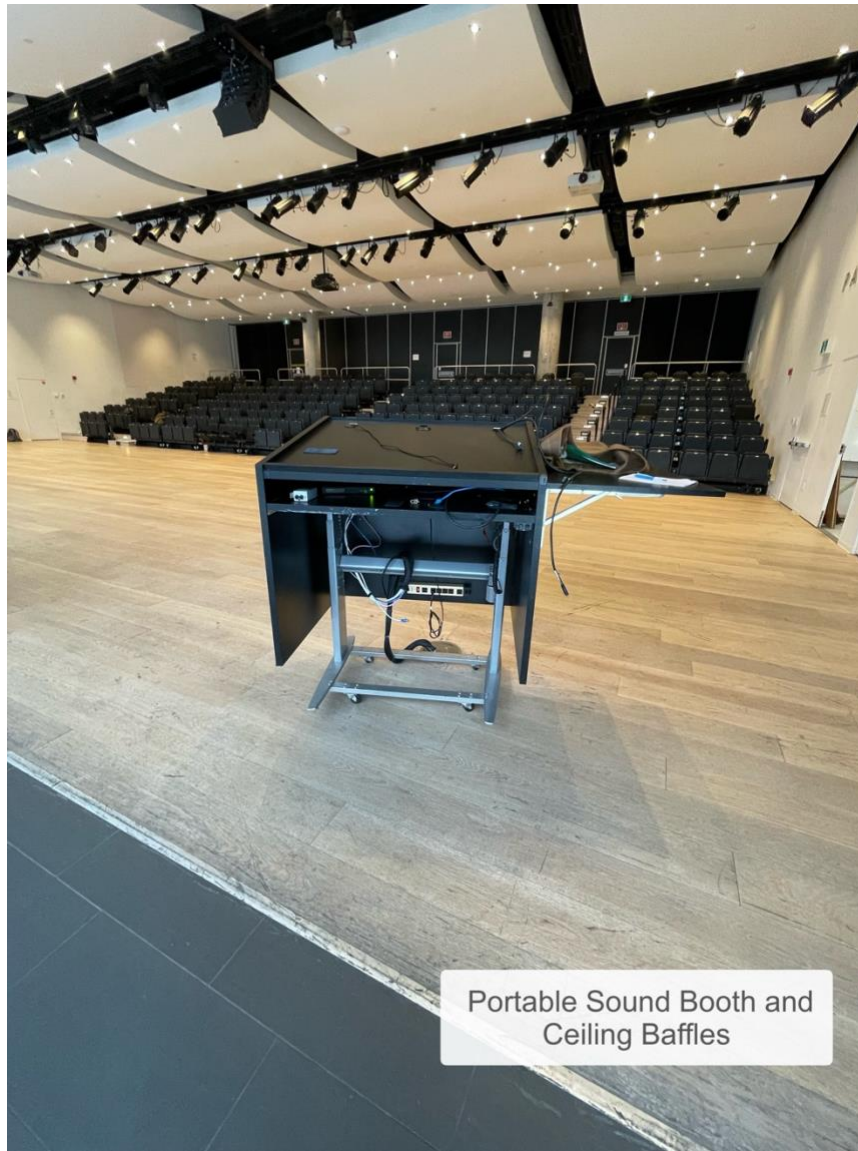
26. Is allergen information clearly displayed?

Families, Caregivers, and Service Animals

27. Are family-friendly spaces provided for artists with caregiving responsibilities?

28. Are service animal relief areas easily accessible?

2B: Companion To The Adaptive Environment



A portable sound booth and acoustic treatment in the Paul O'Regan Hall at Halifax Central Library

Bite #1: Accommodating Indigenous Smudging Ceremonies in Performance Spaces

Smudging is a spiritual practice for many Indigenous communities. This includes the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia (Mi'kma'ki). This ceremony involves burning sacred medicines like sage or sweetgrass to cleanse the mind, body, and space. Historically, smudging and other traditions were suppressed under colonial laws such as the Indian Act. Today, smudging is legally protected by the Nova Scotia Smoke-Free Places Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Supporting smudging ceremonies is a way to recognize Indigenous rights, promote cultural safety, and address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.



1 Braided sweetgrass and leather-bound feathers

Setting The Stage

A group of indigenous musicians are the headlining act at a venue. They ask to perform a smudging ceremony during a rehearsal the day of their show. While the venue supports the request, some staff express concerns about fire safety, smoke alarms, and a team member with asthma.

Reflection

What policies does your venue have in place to balance cultural practices like smudging with the health and safety needs of staff and patrons?

Actions

Recognize Legal and Cultural Importance.

- ▶▶ Smudging is exempt from smoking restrictions under Nova Scotia's Smoke-Free Places Act (Section 3(2), page 3).
- ▶▶ Smudging helps cleanse spaces and prepare for creative activities (UNDRIP Article 12:1).
- ▶▶ This practice is an act of reconciliation and healing (TRC Call to Action #22).

Plan And Communicate Clearly.

- ▶▶ Work with Indigenous groups to schedule smudging ceremonies while considering the venue's needs.
- ▶▶ Designate safe indoor or outdoor areas for smudging. When outdoors, provide privacy and respect for the ceremony.

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- » Temporarily disable smoke detectors in smudging areas, following fire safety protocols such as keeping fire extinguishers nearby and having staff trained in fire response. Support Staff with Environmental Needs
- » Temporarily relocate or reschedule staff members with sensitivities, making sure they do not lose work hours.
- » Use air purifiers or ventilation systems in areas where smudging occurs to minimize smoke retention.
- » Keep emergency resources, such as inhalers or first-aid supplies, readily available for staff with asthma or similar conditions.
- » Maintain open communication with staff to understand specific needs and provide accommodations.

Train and Inform Staff

- » Provide training on the history and cultural significance of smudging, including its suppression under colonial laws.
- » Update venue policies to include clear guidance on smudging accommodations, emphasizing how to balance cultural practices with individual health needs.

Resources

-  [NSCAD University Smudging Policy](#)
-  [Nova Scotia Health Authority IWK Smudging Policy](#)
-  [Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre](#)

Bite #2: Amplifying African-Nova Scotian Voices

African Nova Scotians are part of a distinct Black community with deep roots in Nova Scotia's history. For over 400 years, they have contributed to the province's culture, from the arrival of Black Loyalists to their connection with the Underground Railroad. Despite their significant influence, systemic barriers have limited their opportunities and representation in the music industry.

This section also includes the broader Black music community in Nova Scotia, highlighting the experiences of both African Nova Scotians and other Black artists. It focuses on addressing issues like underrepresentation, anti-Black racism, and the need for tailored support.



Portia White, a groundbreaking African Nova Scotian singer, became one of Canada's first internationally acclaimed classical vocalists

Setting The Stage

An all-Black punk band experiences microaggressions backstage at a local music venue, like dismissive comments and assumptions about their musical style. The venue has no clear protocols for addressing these incidents, leaving the artist feeling unwelcome. These experiences highlight the need for venues to create clear policies and take intentional steps to support African-Nova Scotian and other Black artists

Reflection

What policies and practices does your venue have in place to address racism, amplify Black voices, and create welcoming environments?

Actions

Include Black Voices in Programming

- ▶ Collaborate with organizations like the African Nova Scotian Music Association (ANSMA) and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia to include diverse Black perspectives.
- ▶ Book Black artists across various genres, like punk, hip-hop, and folk to reflect the full spectrum of musical talent.
- ▶ Hire Black curators, advisors, or planners to guide programming decisions.

Train Non-Black Staff to Address Racism

- ▶ Provide training for staff on anti-oppression, the history of African Nova Scotians, and how to respond to microaggressions.
- ▶ Use workshops to educate staff on the systemic barriers that Black artists face in the music industry.

Establish and Share Zero-Tolerance Policies

- ▶ Create clear policies against racist behaviour and share them with staff, performers, and audiences.
- ▶ Post these policies in contracts, on your website, and in visible areas at the venue.

Celebrate Black Culture

- ▶ Plan events that highlight African-Nova Scotian culture, including during Black History Month and Emancipation Day.

- ▶▶ Feature Black artists throughout the year, making their contributions a regular part of your programming.

Resources

- 📁 [Black Artists Network of Nova Scotia \(BANNS\)](#)
- 📁 [Music Nova Scotia African Nova Scotian/Black Music Diversity Committee Report](#)
- 📁 [African Nova Scotian Music Association \(ANSMA\)](#)
- 📁 [The Very Black History Of Punk Music](#)
- 📁 [The story of Africville](#)

Bite #3: Barriers To Hiring Immigrant Artists

Immigrant artists bring fresh perspectives and talents to local music and arts scenes, showcasing Nova Scotia's growing cultural diversity. For example, Charanjit Singh, an Indian musician, combined traditional ragas with electronic disco beats in the 1990s, and is considered the grandfather of modern acid house music. His work shows how blending cultural influences can create entirely new genres that shape global music scenes.

But navigating immigration regulations can be complicated, creating barriers for both artists and venues.



Charanjit Singh: Ten Ragas to A Disco Beat

Setting The Stage

A Halifax-based musician from Mumbai is invited to perform at a local venue while on a temporary visa. Uncertainty about payment under work permit regulations delays payments, leaving the artist frustrated and excluded.

Reflection

What steps does your venue take to support and include immigrant and TFW (Temporary Foreign Worker) artists?

Actions

Work Permit Exemptions and Flexible Payment Options

- ▶ Immigration rules vary by visa type, engagement length, and payment structure.
- ▶ Work with immigration consultants or organizations like IRCC to confirm if a work permit exemption applies.
- ▶ Explore alternatives like honorariums or discreet cash payments to compensate artists. Clearly communicate the potential risks involved and let the artist decide if this option aligns with their preferences.

Outreach and Culturally Inclusive Support

- ▶ Share opportunities with immigrant-focused organizations as an outreach effort

- » Distribute calls for artists in multiple languages through cultural associations, community centers, and foreign worker support programs.
- » Translate contracts and key policies to reduce language barriers.
- » Assign a liaison to guide artists through workplace expectations
- » Cultural Sensitivity Training
- » Train staff on common barriers immigrant artists face, like different workplace norms or cultural practices.
- » Promote mutual respect and understanding through informed communication.

Resources

-  [Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia \(ISANS\) Temporary Foreign Worker Support Program:](#)
-  [Nova Scotia Immigration Office](#)
-  [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#)
-  [The Influence of Charanjit Singh](#)

Bite #4: Cultural Bias in Staff and Artist Relations

Cultural misunderstandings, or ‘culture clashes,’ can happen when people come from different backgrounds or believe stereotypes shared through media or social influences. Without understanding other perspectives, misconceptions can shape how people react to cultural traditions in art and music. These moments need thoughtful and careful responses to address bias while respecting everyone.



Canadian composer/producer Michael Brook and legendary Pakistani vocalist Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan collaborated to blend Qawwali music with Western influences, creating groundbreaking works like Night Song.

Setting The Stage

A newcomer DJ is playing Islamic Qawwali music in between sets at a festival in a non-denominational church. Band members, who are part of another marginalized community, complain the music is scary. The festival coordinator gets angry at the DJ, demanding they stop the music, implying they should know better. This leaves the DJ feeling disrespected and alienated for sharing their culture.

Reflection

What policies and training does your venue have to address cultural misunderstandings respectfully and fairly?

Actions

Facilitate Dialogue and Conflict Resolution:

- ▶▶ Create space for open discussions when concerns arise, listening to perspectives before taking action. Train staff to mediate misunderstandings calmly and fairly, focusing on de-escalation

Cultural Awareness and Exchange:

- ▶▶ Provide training for staff and performers on understanding and respecting cultural practices. Frame events as opportunities for cultural exchange

Set Clear Guidelines:

- ▶▶ Develop policies that outline mutual respect among artists and staff. Make sure expectations for inclusivity and fairness are clearly communicated and understood.

Create a Post-Event Plan:

- ▶▶ Meet with all parties involved after an event to address conflicts. If harm was caused, acknowledge the mistake and offer appropriate additional compensation to show accountability

Collaborate with Community-Based Restorative Programs:

- ▶▶ Partner with local organizations offering restorative justice services to address conflicts in ways that reflect community needs. These programs can support mediation and promote understanding.

Resources

-  [Community Justice Society](#)
-  [Respectful Workplaces in the Arts](#)
-  [Canada Council Tools for arts organizations](#)

Bite #5: Accessible Load-in Zones and Backline

Load-in is a key part of every show and often one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects. Artists face issues like no designated loading zones, cluttered pathways, and distant parking with heavy gear and inclement weather. Taking practical steps to remove barriers reduces stress and creates a smoother process for everyone.



Priority Musicians Loading & Unloading sign. Photo credit: City of Seattle

Setting The Stage

A touring band arrives at a venue on a rainy day with a van full of gear, which they agreed to share with the other bands on the bill. Without a loading zone or nearby parking, they must navigate wet, crowded streets and stairs while exhausted from traveling. The delays and extra effort lead to unnecessary stress and a late sound check

Reflection

What steps does your venue take to make load-ins safe and manageable for musicians?

Actions

Prepare for Accessible Load-Ins

- ▶▶ Offer and maintain equipment like hand carts, dollies, wagons, and portable or track ramps for wheeling gear onto the stage.
- ▶▶ Keep pathways clear and step-free to minimize obstacles.
- ▶▶ Reserve parking spots near entrances, or designate a stopping zone for unloading when accessible parking is unavailable.
- ▶▶ Assign willing staff or volunteers to help with heavy lifting and transporting equipment.

Tech and Access Riders

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- » Use clear tech-rider protocols to communicate what backline equipment (e.g. guitar amps, drum kits) will be available at the venue well in advance.
- » Include questions about load-in and accessibility needs in tech riders and share information about available support, tools, and accessible features with artists ahead of the event.

Backline Support, and Gear Sharing

- » Oversee communication between bands and sound technicians, well in advance, to arrange gear sharing, especially for heavy items like vintage tube amps, to minimize load-in challenges.
- » Provide information on local rental services (e.g. Long & McQuade) and assist with rental logistics for headlining acts when feasible.
- » Train staff on proper lifting techniques and ergonomic practices to reduce physical strain and promote safer load-in practices.

Resources

-  [Backstage Culture – What Makes a Great Backstage?](#)
-  [Real Change News – Advocating Safe and Enforceable Artist Parking and Loading Zones](#)
-  [AccessRamp & Mobility Systems](#)

Bite #6: All-Gender Facilities: Bathrooms, Dressing Rooms and Inclusive Signage

Gendered washrooms and dressing rooms can present significant challenges for 2SLGBTQIA+ artists (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities).

Exclusionary, binary-focused designs can cause discomfort, safety concerns, and gender dysphoria (this is a term for a deep sense of unease and distress that may occur when your biological sex does not match your gender identity). This can impact artists' well-being and sense of belonging. You can address these barriers through gender-neutral facilities with thoughtful design that prioritize privacy, safety, and accessibility.



Setting The Stage

A nonbinary artist (someone who does not identify as a man or a woman) begins menstruating unexpectedly just before arriving at the venue, and urgently needs to use the bathroom. They worry about potential harassment or confrontation if they use the men's washroom. Presenting as masculine, they also feel discomfort using the women's washroom but need access to sanitary disposal facilities. These concerns add to their stress, leaving them distracted and anxious before going on stage.

Reflection

What measures does your venue have in place to provide safe and inclusive facilities that meet the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ artists?

Actions

Understand Emotional Barriers

- ▶ Recognize that misgendering, harassment, and dysphoria can happen in gendered spaces.
- ▶ Acknowledge the stress and hypervigilance people can feel in binary facilities.

Inclusive Design

- ▶ Create gender-neutral washrooms and dressing rooms with privacy, safety, and accessibility as priorities.
- ▶ Use thoughtful layouts, like private stalls with floor-to-ceiling partitions, or cordoned-off sections using curtains

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- » Include sanitary disposal bins and free tampons, pads and unscented wipes in all washrooms regardless of the sign on the door

Practical and Social Barriers

- » Include Two-Spirit (2S) identities in all practices to recognize unique Indigenous experiences.
- » Train staff to respond respectfully to concerns about facility use and promote a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- » Refer to the access rider to confirm the artist's correct pronouns to avoid misgendering your guests.
- » Provide at least two gender-neutral options, including at least one that is wheelchair accessible, to minimize wait times.

Visibility and Communication

- » Use visual cues like signage, posters, or decals to signal inclusivity.
- » Promote the availability of gender-neutral washrooms and dressing rooms on your website, event pages, and promotional materials.
- » Incorporate access riders or pre-event communication tools to understand and meet individual needs.

Signage

- » Clearly indicate the types of facilities available

Examples:

“All-Gender Restroom - Stalls Only.”

“All-Gender Restroom - Stalls and Urinals.”

“Private Single-Use Restroom.”

- » Avoid binary imagery like stick figures in skirts and pants.

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- » Place wayfinding signs at decision points (like hallway intersections) to help people find the washrooms.
- » Maintain uniformity in signage throughout the venue
- » Include supplemental signs or posters near restrooms explaining your venue's commitment to inclusivity.

Accessible Signage

- » Place signs at accessible heights between 120-160 cm (47.2-63 inches) at decision points.
- » If making DIY signs, use a Braille label maker or a regular label-maker with raised, embossed lettering.
- » Include directional arrows.
- » Use high-contrast colour and simple, sans-serif fonts.
- » Use matte magnetic re-usable laminate covers to reduce glare

Resources

-  [Printable All-Gender Signage](#)
-  [Public Service Alliance of Canada: Gender-Inclusive Washrooms in Your Workplace](#)
-  [Queer CREATIVE NETWORK](#)
-  [What Is Two-Spirit? Part One: Origins](#)

Bite #7: Sensory-Inclusive Backstages

Creating a sensory-inclusive backstage environment is an ideal support for neurodivergent artists, like those with autism or ADHD, as well as artists with PTSD or Complex PTSD, who may experience heightened sensory sensitivities. This is equally important for touring crews and family members traveling with artists who may also have sensory needs. Having access to a quiet, secure space allows everyone to decompress, store their belongings safely, and prepare for the show without added stress. People with sensory sensitivities often experience sensations in a heightened way that is disorienting or even painful.

Sensory overload happens when a person is exposed to too much sensory stimulation like loud, repetitive noises, bright or flashing lights, strong scents, or scratchy material, leading to a state of overwhelm. Everyone is different and what might be overstimulating for one person could be calming for another.



Setting The Stage

An autistic touring musician, after weeks on the road with long drives and late nights, becomes overwhelmed when there is no green room at the latest venue. The constant noise, bright lights, and chaotic atmosphere are overstimulating, leaving them unable to recharge or focus before their set.

Reflection

How does your venue create a welcoming and supportive environment for artists with sensory sensitivities?

Actions

Create Quiet Zones and Restorative Spaces

- ▶▶ Even if space is limited, you can make a big difference with simple adjustments. Set up a small, curtained-off area backstage with a comfortable chair and soft lighting.
- ▶▶ Partner with nearby businesses, like a quiet café or hotel lobby, to offer artists and crew a calm place to take a break. Share this information in advance through pre-event communications or the access rider.
- ▶▶ Equip quiet spaces with things like comfy seating, weighted blankets, fidget tools, and soft lighting.
- ▶▶ Use the term “sensory-friendly” to show that you’re taking proactive steps to make the space welcoming for everyone, especially those with sensory processing needs.

- » Clear signage with symbols or multilingual directions can help artists and crew easily find the green room or quiet zone.
- » Provide Noise-Reduction Tools, Sensory Support Kits, and Manage Sound Levels
- » Offer noise-canceling headphones or free earplugs at key locations like the box office, backstage, and bar.
- » For someone sensitive to sound, like a musician's family member, noise-canceling headphones can make the show more enjoyable.
- » Keep rehearsals and pre-performance noise to a minimum and set backstage noise limits.
- » Offer sensory support kits like those developed by Autism Canada, which may include ear defenders, fidget tools, sunglasses, and calming items. These can be available at the box office, green room, or quiet zones.
- » Use a decibel meter app to monitor sound levels and reduce stage noise with acoustic treatments when possible.

Adjust Lighting and Visual Stimuli

- » Use dimmable or adjustable lights in backstage areas to prevent overstimulation.
- » Warm-toned lighting can help create a calming environment in quiet zones.
- » Work with artists during tech rehearsals to fine-tune sound and lighting intensities to meet their needs.
- » Communicate Proactively and Train Staff
- » Talk to artists ahead of time about their sensory needs and noise management preferences.
- » Train staff to be proactive about accommodations and how to support requests for sensory-friendly spaces or quiet areas.

Accessible and Secure Storage Options

- ▶ Provide labeled storage bins for artists or crew who might need help staying organized, like a lighting technician with ADHD.
- ▶ Set up secure lockers or storage closets for valuables, expensive equipment, or personal items.
- ▶ Place storage options in safe, low-traffic areas and share details about how to access them during pre-event communication and on-site orientation.

Resources

-  [Access All Areas: Eliminating barriers for neurodiverse people in music](#)
-  [Demystifying Sensory Inclusion: Where Everyone Feels Welcome](#)
-  [Creating Sensory-Friendly Workspaces and Mind-Friendly Environments](#)
-  [Autism Canada's sensory support kits](#)

Bite #8 Air Quality and Scent-Free Policies

Nova Scotia's humid climate and aging buildings can make maintaining healthy air quality a challenge. Poor air quality from mold and chemicals have caused some of the worst workplace health crises in Canada, including Halifax West High School, and Camp Hill Medical Hospital in Halifax. In the 90's, more than 700 hospital workers reported serious symptoms like trouble breathing, extreme fatigue, memory loss, and neuromuscular issues. Over 300 workers had to stop working for months or even years, and as of 2009, more than 100 were permanently disabled. Environmental illness is a general term for a variety of chronic health conditions that are caused by exposure to toxins or other environmental substances.

This example of Sick Building Syndrome shows how dangerous poor air quality can be in shared spaces. Many people lost their health and livelihoods. These lessons highlight the importance of taking proactive measures to maintain good air quality.



The Former Camp Hill Medical Centre, Robie St. Halifax, 1967

The Former Camp Hill Medical Centre, Robie St. Halifax, 1967

Setting The Stage

In a historic Halifax venue, the green room is in a basement with musty air and high humidity. A musician with asthma struggles to prepare for their performance due to poor ventilation and the use of scented cleaning products. This ultimately led to the cancellation of their show.

Reflection

What steps does your venue take to improve air quality and provide scent-free environments for artists and staff?

Actions

Improve Air Quality

- ▶▶ Install portable HEPA filters in green rooms, rehearsal spaces, and dressing areas to reduce airborne allergens and pollutants.
- ▶▶ These measures also help reduce the spread of airborne viruses, such as COVID-19
- ▶▶ Maintain HVAC systems regularly by replacing filters and repairing ventilation issues.
- ▶▶ Control indoor humidity levels to prevent mold growth and address damp areas or leaks promptly.

Implement Scent-Free Policies

- » Use fragrance-free cleaning products, soaps, and hand sanitizers throughout the venue.
- » Designate scent-free zones backstage and mark them with clear signage.
- » Educate and Inform
- » Communicate scent-free policies and air quality practices in pre-arrival materials for artists and staff.
- » Train staff on the importance of air quality and scent-free policies
- » Develop protocols for sudden air quality issues, such as wildfire smoke, leaking roofs, or mold outbreaks.

Adopt Best Practices for Historic Buildings

- » Conduct a building assessment to identify flaws or maintenance needs.
- » Prioritize repairs that address water damage, leaks, or other contributors to unhealthy indoor air.
- » Upgrade older ventilation systems to meet modern air quality standards.

Resources

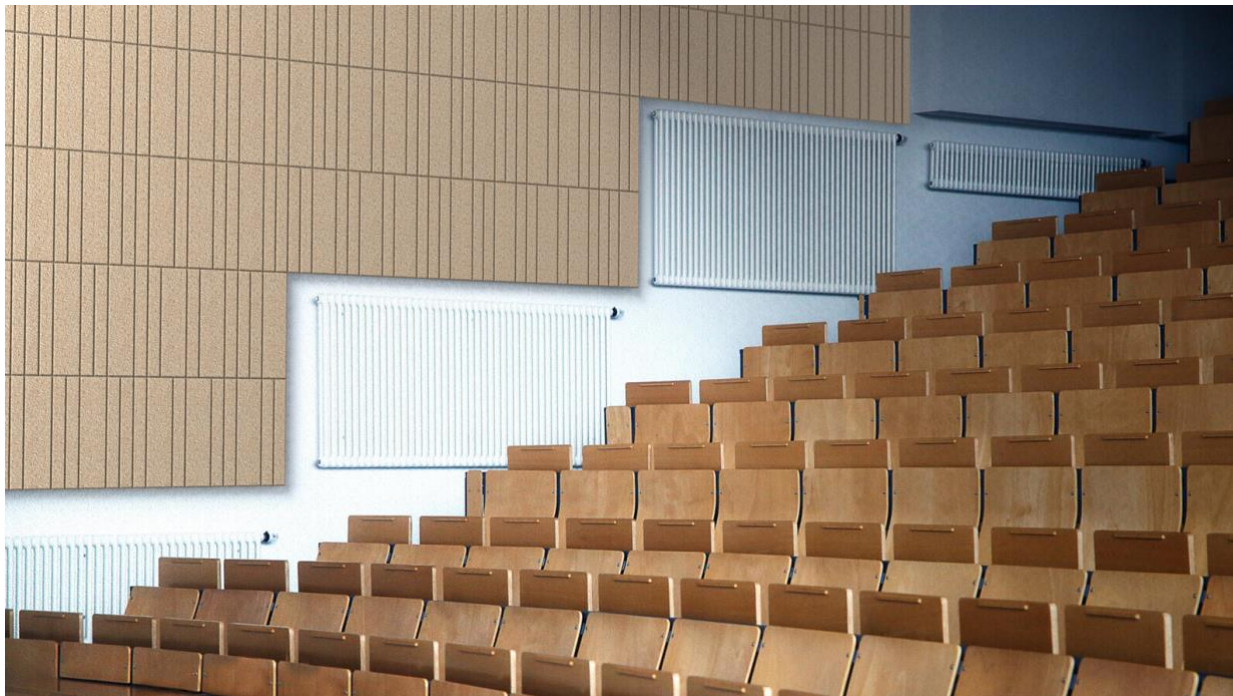
-  [Halifax West: Lessons from a sick school](#)
-  [Environmentally Induced Dysfunction: The Camp Hill Medical Centre Experience](#)
-  [Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia \(EHANS\)](#)
-  [Canada Health – Reducing Humidity and Mold Risks](#)

Bite #9: DeafSpace Communication Design Principles in Arts Spaces

DeafSpace was created by d/Deaf architects and designers at Gallaudet University in D.C. Developed to make spaces that fit the needs of Deaf people, it focuses on how they move, communicate, and interact with the world.

DeafSpace principles can be applied to the designing of arts spaces to make them more accessible and welcoming for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing artists and musicians.

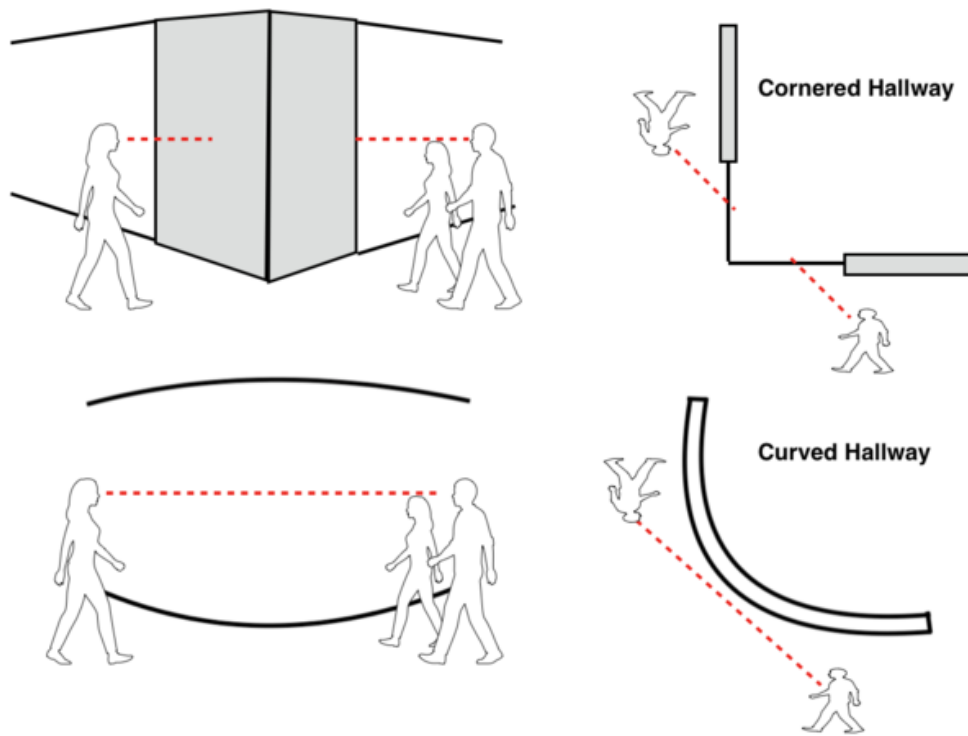
Acoustic panels can absorb or diffuse (scatter) sound in a big, airy space. This helps to control echoes, reverberation, minimize noise build-up, and make communication easier by helping voices or instruments to be heard and understood.



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The 5 Principles of DeafSpace

1. Space and Proximity: Visual communication without obstruction by maintaining comfortable distances for signing or lip reading.
2. Sensory Reach: The ways people can see, hear, or feel their surroundings.
3. Mobility: pathways that support smooth and unobstructed movement while maintaining connections
4. Light and Colour: lighting and colour schemes that support visibility for signing, facial expressions, and movement.
5. Acoustics: Reducing unintentional noise, echoes, and reverb for sound clarity



An example of Deafspace design showing unobstructed sightlines at a turn in a corridor.

Image credit: [Asmaa Hamed Abdel-Maksoud](#) licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Setting The Stage

A d/Deaf experimental musician is rehearsing alone in the venue before opening hours, working with vibrational soundscapes. When a fire alarm goes off, the venue's lack of visual or tactile alerts prevents her from being informed of the emergency. Thankfully, it was a false alarm. This situation underscores the importance of accessible communication systems to keep everyone safe.

Reflection

How does your venue use DeafSpace principles to support effective communication and create inclusive environments for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing artists?

Actions

Sensory Reach

- ▶▶ Install visual alarms like flashing strobes, throughout the venue including green rooms
- ▶▶ Use pagers or vibrating devices to notify artists of stage calls, emergency alerts, and announcements. Group text threads can serve as a practical solution.

Space and Proximity

- ▶▶ Remove obstacles to keep facial expressions and body language within the line of site and designate open backstage areas
- ▶▶ Arrange seating in circular or semi-circular layouts in green rooms or jam spaces.

Mobility and Proximity

- ▶▶ Hallways and ramps should be wide and free of obstacles, making it easier for people to walk and communicate.
- ▶▶ Emergency exits should have illuminated signs that can be seen from all angles, even in dim lighting.
- ▶▶ Use screens like tablets or monitors backstage to visually share updates, schedules, and emergency instructions in real time.

Light and Colour

- ▶▶ Use soft lighting that avoids glare and makes it easier to see hands and faces when signing.
- ▶▶ Install dimmable, adjustable lighting in green rooms and backstage areas to reduce visual strain.
- ▶▶ Choose contrasting colours for directional and informational signage to make backstage navigation easier and faster.

Acoustics

- ▶▶ Use acoustic treatment with sound absorptive and diffusive materials in backstage areas to minimize ambient noise, echoes, and reverb. This helps people who use hearing aids or prefer quieter spaces.

Resources

-  [DeafSpace Design Guidelines](#)
-  [DE'VIA | MDHAC](#)
-  [Museum of Deaf History, Arts & Culture](#)
-  [Canadian Hearing Services](#)

Bite #10: On-stage Navigation and Gear ID for Blind and Low-Vision Musicians

Blindness and low vision exist on a spectrum, ranging from partial sight to complete blindness. Some people might rely on peripheral vision, light perception, or magnification. These impact how musicians navigate venues, interact with equipment, and perform on stage. Venues can use tactile elements like embossed labels and textured stickers to help musicians identify gear, inputs and operational controls like dials and faders.

High colour-contrast, cane-detectable stage edges and communicating stage plots can make it easier to safely navigate the stage. Accessible backline gear and stage equipment can significantly improve user experience.

A basic understanding of how to provide sighted guidance with dignity and respect, along with advance planning for accommodations, can also make a big impact.



I use reflective, tactile jewel stickers on my battered Roland SP-404 sampler for performing in dark nightclubs.

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Setting The Stage

A legally blind guitarist had requested a 1969 Silverface Fender Twin Reverb amp on their tech rider, specifying the need for tactile markers on their presets for vibrato, reverb, and mids. They also agreed to allow the opening act to use their backline.

When they arrive for soundcheck, they find the venue didn't follow through on their request. This forces the guitarist to request a line-check, while relying on auditory cues and knob-fiddling to adjust their tone during, eating into their set time.

Reflection

How can your venue incorporate tactile and visual accessibility solutions to support seamless performances and prevent delays?

Actions

Tactile Markers

- ▶▶ Use Braille or embossed-letter label makers to identify controls on amps, mixers, and other shared equipment.
- ▶▶ You can also utilize fabric hockey tape, liquid latex, or stickers with raised textures.
- ▶▶ Products like 'Bump Dots' are made specifically for tactile identification.
- ▶▶ Place them on key areas like gain, tone and EQ knobs, inputs, outputs, switches, and channel selectors for on-the-fly changes and troubleshooting.

On-stage Navigation and Cane-Detectability

- ▶▶ Use high-contrast tape or glow-in-the-dark markers on the edges of stages, ramps, and stairs.
- ▶▶ Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) are cane-detectable solutions for identifying hazards.
- ▶▶ Apply fabric tape on the floor to delineate and identify monitor wedges, mic stands, and DI boxes.
- ▶▶ This helps keep equipment placement predictable and consistent across performances.

High-Contrast Cable ID

- ▶▶ Use brightly coloured cable wraps and a consistent colour-coded labeling system for quick ID of patch cords, XLR, and power cables.

Clear and Safe Stage Pathways

- ▶▶ Keep paths free of obstructions and loose cables.
- ▶▶ Use cable ramps or beveled wire covers where needed.

Stage Position Terminology

- ▶▶ Familiarize yourself with common stage positions.
- ▶▶ Use verbal cues to describe the setup:

“Your amp is at the back-left corner, and monitors are positioned downstage center.”

Terms for Stage Positions

- » Learn basic sighted guide techniques.
- » Never push, pull, or grab anyone except in the case of an emergency.
- » Do not make assumptions. Always ask the person first if they would like sighted guide support.

Communication and Access Riders

- » Allow performers time before the show to familiarize themselves with tactile markers, cable tags, and stage layout.
- » Communicate in advance your venue's approach to tactile and visual markings. Include this information in booking contracts and on your website.

Additional Notes

- » Apply these concepts across the venue to label backstage/green room operational controls like light switches, heating and cooling, microwaves, and on personal items like food and beverage hospitality.
- » If pre-packaged meals were included on the hospitality rider, you can use tactile labeling for quick food and drink ID in the fridge.

Resources

-  [A Guide to Common Stage Positioning Terms](#)
-  [How to Be a Sighted Guide](#)
-  [Tactile Solutions for Accessibility: A Comprehensive Guide](#)
-  [Tactile Labeling](#)

Bite #11: Green Rooms for Artists with Chronic Pain, Mobility Aid Users, and Invisible Disabilities

Navigating a performance space can be challenging for artists with chronic pain and mobility disabilities. Chronic pain, often invisible to others, affects how a person moves, making actions like walking, bending, reaching, or standing difficult.

Many disabled artists use mobility aids like wheelchairs, power chairs, walkers, rollators, crutches, or canes, which shape how they interact with a space. Barriers like hard-to-reach power outlets, heavy equipment, or uncomfortable seating can make preparation for a performance exhausting.

Some disabilities are invisible. Invisible disabilities are health conditions not immediately apparent but significantly impacting daily life. A lack of visible indicators can lead to misunderstandings or inadequate support.

Examples of invisible disabilities include:

- » Chronic pain
- » Mental health conditions
- » Sensory impairments
- » Cognitive disabilities
- » Autoimmune disorders

Other disabilities may be more visible. A wheelchair or a cane can act as a visual indicator. Some people also may be able to walk short distances, depending on the day, while others experience fluctuating or intermittent conditions. The result is that their support needs can vary.

- » An ambulatory mobility aid user may walk short distances but rely on a mobility aid for longer distances or when fatigued.

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- » A wheelchair user might stand briefly to fold and store their chair in a vehicle
- » Someone with chronic pain or fatigue might carry a folding cane in a bag to use only when needed.
- » Someone who temporarily uses crutches after breaking an ankle

Creating accessible spaces begin with attitudinal changes, understanding, and responding to the many different experiences of disabled artists with invisible disabilities and mobility needs.

Setting The Stage

A musician who uses a wheelchair to get around is preparing in the green room before going on stage. They need a quiet, dimly lit space to rest in a reclined position because of chronic pain and light sensitivity. However, the room has bright fluorescent lighting, and the switches are hard to locate and out of reach. There is no transfer bar near the sofa, so they are unable to lay down.

How does your venue create a functional green room that supports artists with chronic pain, mobility aid users, and invisible disabilities?

Actions

Navigation

- Maintain clear pathways with enough turning space for wheelchair or scooter users
- Keep areas uncluttered, free from cords, equipment, trash bins or other obstacles.

Rest and Recovery

- » Different types of chairs with adjustable height, sturdy armrests, and high-back lumbar support.
- » Recliners, folding cots, portable loungers, sectionals with chaise, or padded benches for laying down
- » Footrests like lightweight ottomans or poufs. Cushions with lumbar support.
- » Portable heating pads and ice packs, with mini-coolers and microwaves
- » Portable, secure grab bars with suction cups.
- » Anti-fatigue mats with beveled edges
- » Ergonomic instrument stands with adjustable heights

Charging Stations, Storage and Organization

- » Accessible power strips, USB hubs, and wireless charging pads at reachable heights.
- » Portable Charging docks for mobility aids like wheelchairs and scooters
- » Makeup stations with height adjustable counters and seating
- » Adjustable mirrors and drawers at an accessible height

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- » Portable mirror stands adjustable for seated or standing use.
- » Hooks for hanging mobility aids like canes, crutches, or walkers.
- » Wall-mounted coat hooks at varying heights and heavy-duty hooks for bags or mobility aids.
- » Personalized accessibility kits containing grabbers, cushions, and other tools
- » Rolling carts or open shelves for easy-to-access personal belongings.
- » Hand carts, dollies and wagons for storing and transporting gear

Automated Climate and Lighting Control

- » Dimmable, adjustable task lights in green rooms and dressing rooms.
- » Smart devices like Google Home or Alexa for hands-free control of lighting and temperature.
- » Professional solutions like Lutron or Control4 systems for advanced automation.
- » Portable fans or air purifiers for temperature and environmental comfort.

Resources

-  [Universal Design Network of Canada](#)
-  [Independent Society of Musicians](#)
-  [Mobility Aids Supporting Disabled Artists](#)
-  [Time to Act - transnational study](#)

Bite# 12: Mixing In-Ear Monitors (IEMs) for Hard-of-Hearing Musicians

In-ear monitors (IEMs) are important tools for many hard-of-hearing musicians, allowing the user to customize sound isolation, adjust frequencies, and minimize ambient noise. For musicians with hearing loss, common challenges include hearing key frequencies, managing feedback, and isolating instruments. Custom IEM mixes, created in collaboration with sound technicians, help address these issues.

Musicians are four times more likely to develop noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) and face high risks of tinnitus and permanent hearing damage from prolonged exposure to loud sound levels. Tools like IEMs, ear protection, and careful mixing practices safeguard hearing.

Sound techs play an important role in tailoring the IEM setup to the performer's needs, so they can hear themselves and their bandmates clearly. This helps them hit their best notes and stay “in the pocket”.

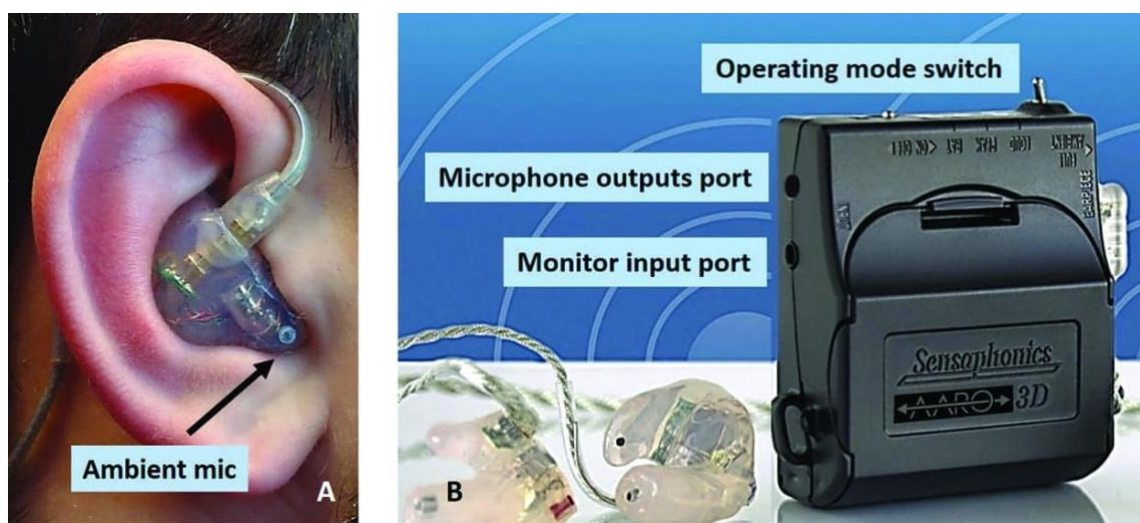


Fig A: IEM earpiece with built-in ambient microphone. Fig B: In-ear-monitor (IEM) belt pack and earpieces, depicted with “microphone outputs” and “monitor input” ports and operating mode switches. The Hearing Review.

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This amp goes to eleven

Setting The Stage

A hard-of-hearing rhythm guitarist arrives for sound check with their own custom-fit in-ear monitor that uses Bluetooth and wired outputs, and needing two channels on the venue's mixing board. The sound technician says there's no time and to just use the floor monitors like everybody else. The guitarist feels frustrated and unheard, not given an opportunity to advocate for their needs due to the fast-pace and other bands waiting.

Reflection

How does your venue approach clear and respectful communication between sound technicians and performers before and during sound checks?

Actions

When mixing in-ear monitors (IEMs), there are general best practices like gain staging, compression, and EQ that apply to all live mixes. Below are a few specific tips for mixing IEMs for Hard of Hearing musicians.

Signal Processing

- Use parametric EQ to focus on clarity, reducing muddiness and cutting harsh tones.
- Adjust the mix to highlight elements like vocals or lead instruments without overpowering other sounds.
- Apply light compression to manage dynamics, smoothing out volume spikes while keeping the performance natural.
- Balance gain levels carefully on every channel to avoid clipping or distortion. Check for consistent levels during sound checks to maintain a clean and reliable mix.
- Ask if they would like some of the ambient room mic in their mix.
- Adding some ambient sound can help them feel more connected to the stage environment and audience, adding a sense of “real-world” context to their isolated mix.
- Some may prefer completely isolated, clean mix, free of effects processing

Collaborative Communication

- Encourage musicians to include specific needs in their technical rider and access rider
- Work with the artist to identify frequencies they rely on or find challenging (like mids for vocal clarity or reduced bass to avoid distortion).
- Use accessible communication tools like tablets, visualizers, or printed guides
-

Equipment Compatibility and Maintenance

- Equip mixing boards that support Bluetooth or FM devices commonly used with hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Use mixing boards or external tools with built-in RTAs (Real-Time Analyzers) or spectrum analyzers to visually monitor and adjust frequencies
- Keep adapters, turnarounds, cables, and other tools on hand for quick integration

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- For analog boards with limited aux sends, daisy chain a small secondary mixer to the main board for independent IEM control without impacting the house mix.

Resources

-  [Challenges Faced by Hearing-impaired Musicians Performing on Loud Amplified Stages](#)
-  [Musicians and Hearing Aid Design](#)
-  [#KeepListening Campaign](#)

Bite #13: Food and Beverage Hospitality - Catering to Medical and Cultural Dietary Needs

Artists depend on backstage spaces for rest and recovery, especially when gruelling touring schedules come into play.

Offering healthy and inclusive food and drink options should not be considered a courtesy, but an essential practice. Long days on the road coupled with late nights can be emotionally and physically taxing, and specific dietary or medical needs add another layer of complexity.

It always helps to understand cultural differences in order to provide the best support to musicians and artists regardless of race, origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, social class, economic situation, and/or disability.

Cultures and food traditions can influence:

- ▶▶ How you eat
- ▶▶ What you eat
- ▶▶ When you eat
- ▶▶ Where you get food
- ▶▶ How you prepare food

It is best not to assume that your past experiences with a person from a particular culture can be applied to everyone from that culture. Always communicate with the artist about their needs and how to accommodate them.

Some artists need accommodations for cultural, medical, or ethical reasons, like halal, vegan, kosher, or allergen-free diets.

Halal: Made, produced, manufactured, processed, and stored using machinery, equipment, and/or utensils that have been cleaned according to Islamic law (shariah). Pork and pork products like bacon, ham or pepperoni are not allowed.

Kosher: Food that is made, produced, manufactured, processed, and stored using machinery, equipment, and/or utensils that have been cleaned according to Jewish kosher law. Pork and pork products like bacon, ham or pepperoni are not allowed.

Vegetarian/Vegan: Meat and fish-free, with vegan options also avoiding dairy, eggs, and animal derived products, which may include honey.

Allergen-Free: Catering to dietary restrictions like nut-free, gluten-free, or dairy-free accommodates medical conditions like allergies or celiac disease

Setting The Stage

A musician with a severe nut allergy feels lightheaded and dehydrated after a long set. They have only been offered drink tickets for beer and cocktails. The only snacks available are open bowls of popcorn and peanuts on the bar, which are at risk of cross-contamination.

Reflection

How can your venue offer backstage food and drink options that respect artists' different dietary, cultural, and emergency needs?

Actions

Personalized Dietary Support

- ▶▶ Ask about dietary needs when booking an artist, include these questions in their rider.
- ▶▶ Create special areas for preparing food without allergen risks.
- ▶▶ Offer meal options like:
 - Salad bars
 - Build-your-own bowls
 - Individual packaged meals
 - Accessible Snack and Hydration Stations
 - Put water stations in convenient locations like bathrooms and green rooms.
 - Offer different drinks like sparkling water, electrolyte drinks, and caffeine-free tea.
- ▶▶ Provide snacks that can support different dietary needs:
 - Gluten-free
 - Nut-free
 - Dairy-free
 - Vegan
 - Halal
 - Kosher
- ▶▶ Clearly mark all food with allergen and diet information.
- ▶▶ Keep food service areas clean, and food at appropriate temperatures using coolers, fridges or buffet warmers.
- ▶▶ Have quick energy snacks like fresh fruit, trail mix, or protein bars.

Emergency Preparedness

- ▶▶ Keep helpful items close by like:
 - Glucose tablets
 - Juice boxes
 - EpiPens
- ▶▶ Train staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and to use an EpiPen correctly. Always call for emergency help.

Resources

-  [Canada's Food Guide](#)
-  [Consider culture and food traditions](#)
-  [How to use an EpiPen](#)
-  [Food Allergy Reaction Signs and Symptoms](#)

Bite# 14 Families, Caregivers, Service Animals, and Prayer Spaces

Work-life balance as a creative can become complicated by intensive, unconventional work schedules, religious observances and caregiving duties. Local performers may also be primary caregivers for a family member. A touring musician may have to bring their nursing infant on the road. Some people may require a dignified space for ostomy care, or assistance with toileting and personal care.

Islam requires prayers called Salat (صلاة) be performed five times a day. This inevitably means Salat can occur at times during an artist's busy working schedule and can take 5-10 minutes. Multi-Faith rooms can accommodate diverse religious observances.

Each Muslim requires approximately 1.2m × 0.6m (4' x 2') of clean, personal floor space to perform Salat. This allows them to place their forehead on the floor while kneeling facing Qibla. The qibla is the direction towards the Kaaba, a sacred shrine in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, that Muslims face when praying. The Arabic word Qibla (قبلة) means "direction".

Gaps in these provisions can limit participation and impact the experience of performers and their crew. With some foresight into proactive measures, you can create a space where artists who juggle multiple responsibilities can have the support they need to take on work opportunities with fewer barriers.



A tasbeeh is a set of prayer beads used by Muslims for counting the 99 names of Allah SWT, recite prayers, and meditate. The beads help with concentration and focus, and the repetitive motion can be calming.

Setting The Stage

An actor in a local theatre production, who is also a caregiver, faces a challenging situation during intermission. One of their parents requires assistance with personal care, but the family bathroom lacks an adult changing table and does not have adequate space for safe toilet transfers. With no private or dignified options available, they are forced to leave the theater and assist their parent in the car.

Reflection

What steps does your venue take to support families, caregivers, service animals, and people requiring prayer spaces?

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[Horton](#) is a Beautiful Golden Retriever full of life. He is being trained as a Psychiatric Service Dog for his handler

Actions

Family-Friendly Spaces

Create safe, sensory-friendly play areas for kids.

Provide furniture for nursing and diaper changes.

Power stations at accessible heights for charging breast pumps, and refrigeration options for breast milk.

Share a list of trusted local childcare services

Adult Changing Tables

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Install tables in universally accessible or all-gender washrooms that meet the space requirements

Work with certified professionals to meet safety and accessibility standards.

Stock hygiene supplies: disposable covers, gloves, and disinfectant wipes.

Support for Service Animals

Create easy-to-find rest areas with water, cleaning supplies, and waste bags.

Train staff on respectful interactions with service animals.

Include service animals in emergency evacuation plans.

Multi-Faith Prayer Spaces

Provide an accessible, private, quiet room with clean floor areas, prayer mats, and seating.

Add foot-washing stations and directional signage for Qibla.

Informed Care

Help staff to recognize diverse needs without assumptions.

Include caregiving, service animal, and prayer accommodations in staff training.

Flexible Scheduling

Offer breaks for childcare, prayer, and family responsibilities.

Communicate openly to address scheduling conflicts early

Communication

- ▶▶ Publish a pre-event accessibility guide outlining:
 - Family-friendly spaces.
 - Service animal relief areas.
 - Prayer room availability.
- ▶▶ Use clear, visible signage to guide performers and their teams.

Resources

- 📁 [Canada Legislation for Adult Changing Stations](#)
- 📁 [CAN-ASC-2.3 - 7. Sanitary facilities](#)
- 📁 [Protecting, Promoting And Supporting Breastfeeding](#)
- 📁 [Tips For Designing a Multi-Faith Room](#)

Module 3: Access Riders

INTRO TO ACCESS RIDERS

Access riders provide venue owners, management and staff in music and art spaces with a clear understanding of the specific accommodations and support artists need to perform at their best. Similar to a traditional backstage rider, which specifies an artist's technical and logistical needs (like equipment, stage plots, backline requirements or hospitality requests) for a show or festival, an access rider details accommodations related to accessibility. This may include physical accessibility adjustments, sensory accommodations, mental health needs, and other support measures essential for the artist's well-being and active participation.

Integrating Accessibility as a Core Service in Arts Spaces

Music venues, promoters, festivals and agents should consider accessibility as an essential front- and back-of-house service for artists. This means treating accessibility not as an add-on, but as a fully integrated aspect of daily operations.

Normalizing Accessibility as a Routine and Proactive Measure

Making accessibility a standard part of event planning reduces stigma by incorporating offers of accommodations into standard booking procedures.

Instead of waiting for requests, venues should offer access options proactively

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Advertising Transparency

Venues and promoters should provide clear descriptions and images of accessible features as well as barriers in places like entrances, seating, bathrooms, and stage access on their websites. This helps performers make informed decisions about their visit. This includes outdoor and temporary event spaces.

Including details about accessible seating, assistive listening devices, and other accommodations allows artists and their crew or loved ones to plan their experience.

Staff Training and Onboarding

All staff should be supported and trained on access riders and the specific needs of artists and patrons. This includes skills like implementing dedicated channel mixing protocols for ALDs and making sure offered accommodations are applied safely.

High turnover impacts the quality of accessibility services. Strong onboarding practices offer consistency in providing accessible services to others.

The Path of Least Resistance

The process for submitting access requests should be streamlined, simple and inviting, with clear points of contact.

Having a feedback system helps venues understand accessibility gaps and shows a commitment a continuous improvement approach.

Accessibility as a Journey, not a One-Time Fix

Accessibility isn't a one-time fix. Ongoing assessments help venues adapt to new needs and stay committed to inclusivity.

Recognize that accessibility is a collective responsibility.

Creating and Offering the Access Rider

Access riders should be provided in multiple formats to accommodate different needs. Venues can offer completion options by phone, email, or video call, allowing artists to choose the method most convenient for them.

The rider document should be structured to support screen readers and other assistive technologies. This involves using properly tagged headings, simple tables (no split or complicated cells), and alt text for any images. A clean layout and straightforward language help artists relay their needs without unnecessary complexity.

Artists and their teams should have a designated point of contact at the venue for follow-up questions or further assistance, making it a supportive and inclusive process.

Data Privacy and Secure Information Handling

Given the sensitive nature of access needs, particularly health information, it's important to use secure and privacy-respecting methods for data collection and storage. Venues should rely on trusted platforms that prioritize data protection and confidentiality of personal information.

With explicit consent, venues may consider securely maintaining a record of an artists access needs for future reference. This approach allows venues to anticipate and address individual requirements proactively for future events while respecting privacy and managing all records securely.

Reflections

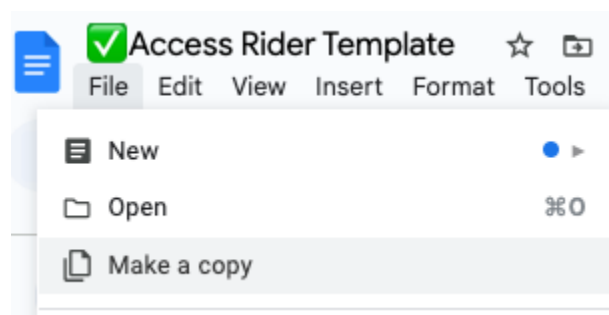
1. How can access riders empower artists to perform confidently and comfortably?
2. How can venues adopt accessibility as a core service?
3. How can proactive accessibility become a part of standard venue practices?
4. How can venues improve online information to better support accessibility for guest performers?
5. How can venues foster a work culture that supports accessibility through training, retention, and clear protocols?
6. How can venues effectively assess both physical and human resources to create a fully accessible environment?
7. What are essential components of a training program to prepare staff for supporting accessibility in every part of the venue?
8. What are some ways venues can make the access request process welcoming and straightforward?
9. Why is it important to view accessibility as a journey, and how can venues commit to continuous improvement?

10. How can venues structure access riders to be both accessible and supportive to meet various needs?

3A: ACCESS RIDER TEMPLATE

You can find the access rider template [here on Google Docs](#).

To make a copy of the Google Doc, navigate to File and select “Make a copy” in the dropdown menu”.



3B: ACCESS RIDER RESOURCE DIRECTORY

The Better Backstages Resource Directory connects venues with local support services in Nova Scotia and Canada-wide. You can find the [link to the spreadsheet](#) on Google Sheets. Please contact Meghan at info@apexartsaccess.com for alternative formats, or if you would like to suggest additional resources.

Module 4: Human Capacity

4A: HUMAN CAPACITY IN INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Accessibility involves the physical **Built Environment**, the **Adaptive Environment**, and **Human Capacity**. Human Capacity includes things like adequate staffing, training, workplace safety, staff supports, and service knowledge.

- ▶ Are staff trained in using assistive tech?
- ▶ Is there enough staff to handle accommodations effectively?
- ▶ Are staff themselves working in a supportive, healthy workplace?

A healthy workplace culture is foundational to providing support to patrons and staff in service and nightlife industries. Dangerous work environments, alcohol consumption, burnout, high staff turnover, and limited onboarding hinder accessibility efforts.

Investing in staff well-being and fair compensation creates a stable and productive workforce, which benefits the business in the long term. Employees who feel supported and valued are more likely to remain loyal, motivated, and committed to delivering excellent service.

This saves money on hiring and training new staff and helps the venue build a good reputation. A happy team also makes it easier to meet accessibility needs and keep things running smoothly.

Reviewing staffing levels, training, and skillsets makes sure that staff can handle accommodations like temporary ramp installations or assistive listening devices (ALDs). Employees should feel that they can voice limitations or ask for accommodation needs without the fear of penalty or exclusion. Employees should have access to the same accessibility measures that artists are offered.

The Human Capacity Audit Tool is designed for music and arts spaces to evaluate workplace well-being and inclusivity. It assesses fair wages and benefits, opportunities for growth, and mental health support. It also covers policies and training related to violence prevention and harm reduction. The tool addresses the needs of marginalized groups, including those with intersecting identities, by:

- ▶▶ Promoting equitable practices and building a safe environment for all staff and patrons.
- ▶▶ Implementing policies and procedures to prevent harm and promote well-being before incidents occur.
- ▶▶ Clear communication and making policies visible and accessible to all staff, performers, and patrons.
- ▶▶ Regular reviews and improvement to continuously evaluate and adapt policies and practices based on feedback and incident reports.
- ▶▶ Collaboration and partnerships with community organizations and experts.

Here we invite music and arts spaces to take a closer look at how their workplace supports fairness, safety, and well-being. By answering “yes,” “no,” or “partial” to a series of questions, venues can uncover gaps in their policies and discover ways to improve.



[Photo credit: HolLynn D'Lil. Brad Lomax, center, next to activist Judy Heumann at a rally in 1977 at Lafayette Square in Washington.]

Brad Lomax, a **Black Panther Party** member and disability activist who helped lead the **“504 Sit In”** to demand the federal government provide accessibility in a federal buildings and institutions.

1.0 Anti-Blackness, Ableism and Disability-Related Misunderstandings in Law Enforcement Interactions

Content Warning: Police brutality, anti-Black racism, ableism

Black disabled people face a much higher risk of police violence and harm due to the combined impact of racism and ableism. These overlapping issues create unique challenges, increasing vulnerability during encounters with law enforcement. Often, police misinterpret disability-related behaviors as non-compliance or threats, leading to escalation and violence. This is particularly dangerous for racialized disabled people, particularly Indigenous and Black individuals who are already more likely to be viewed with suspicion and treated with aggression by law enforcement.

A deaf person may not hear police shouting commands, like **“put your hands up.”**

A paraplegic person sitting in a vehicle may be unable to follow commands to **“get out of the car.”**

When police rely only on verbal commands without considering that someone might not hear or physically respond, situations can escalate quickly, leading to unnecessary and dangerous use of force.

- ▶▶ Police are twice as likely to kill Black people as white people.
- ▶▶ Almost half of all police brutality incidents involve disabled people.
- ▶▶ Half of those killed by police have a disability.

The following examples show just how dangerous interactions with law enforcement can be for Black disabled people and other visible minorities and the need for alternative crisis response that do not only rely on police intervention.

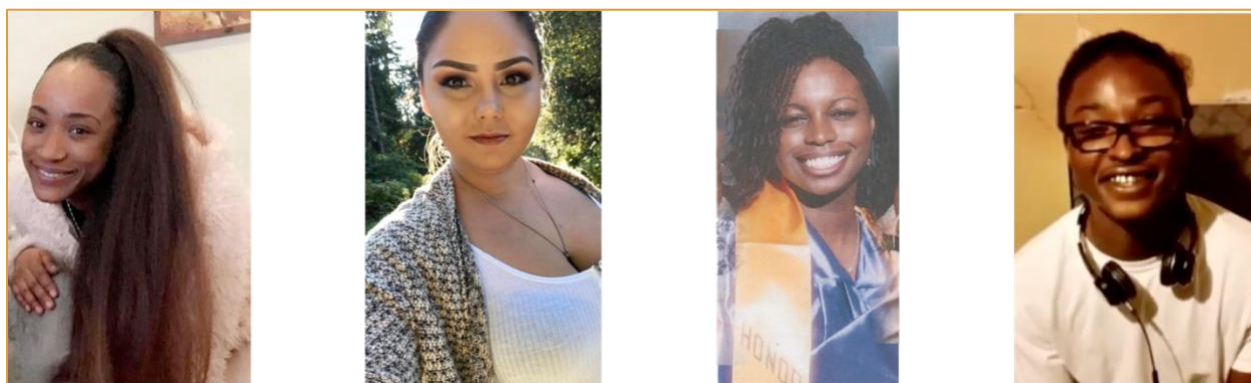
To address police violence against racialized disabled people, we need to understand how racism and ableism combine to create these risks and come up with real solutions to keep everyone safe.

Figure 1: Regis Korchinski-Paquet. Regis was a 29-year-old Black and Indigenous woman who died in 2020 during an interaction with Toronto police.

Figure 2: Chantel Moore. Chantel was an Indigenous woman who was killed by police in Edmundston, New Brunswick, in 2020. The shooting took place during a wellness check, which is when police go to someone's home to make sure they are safe and well.

Figure 3: Natasha was a 37-year-old Black woman who was diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. She died in police custody in the US in 2015 after being repeatedly tased while she was restrained.

Figure 4: D'Andre Campbell. D'Andre was a 26-year-old Black man who had mental health difficulties. He was killed by Peel Regional Police in 2020.



1.Regis

2. Chantel

3. Natasha

4. D'Andre

Resources

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Resources

-  [CBC Investigates: Most Canadians killed in police encounters since 2000 had mental health or substance abuse issues](#)
-  [We Can't Breathe: The Deaf & Disabled Margin of Police Brutality](#)
-  [Disability & Police Brutality: Toronto Neighbourhood Centres Community Safety Development Toolkit](#)
-  [Autistic Self-Advocacy Network: What is Police Violence?](#)

2.0 Responding to Mental Health Crises: Alternatives to Police Intervention

This section offers ideas for different ways to respond to mental health crises in a nightlife setting without calling the police. It lists different resources that can offer support and gives some guidelines for how to respond to a crisis.

Calling the police during a mental health crisis can have negative, and sometimes deadly, results. Police officers might not have the right training to deal with mental health crises, and this could make the situation worse, particularly for people who are part of racialized communities.

To help people in crisis and keep them safe, here are some other options you can try:

Mobile Crisis Teams (MCTs)

These are teams of mental health professionals who are trained to de-escalate crises and provide immediate support.

In Nova Scotia, you can reach the Mobile Crisis Team 24/7 by calling 1-888-429-8167

Crisis Hotlines

These are confidential phone lines that offer immediate help and advice.

In Nova Scotia, you can reach the Mental Health Crisis Line 24/7 at 902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167 (toll free)

Community Health Centers

These local centers offer mental health services and support.

Nova Scotia has Community Health Teams in different locations. You can find the location details on their website [\[click here\]](#)

Peer Support Network

: These organizations offer non-crisis support from people who have personal experience with mental health challenges.

Peer Support Nova Scotia offers peer support programs and resources [\[click here\]](#)

Emergency Departments with Psychiatric Services

Some hospitals have special departments that can handle psychiatric emergencies. The QEII Health Sciences Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is one such hospital.

Non-Emergency Police Lines

You can use these lines if a situation requires police presence, but there is no immediate danger.

The number for the Halifax Regional Police Non-Emergency Line is 902-490-5020.

Immediate Steps

1. First, make sure that the person in crisis, and anyone else around, is safe.
2. If you need immediate support, call a crisis hotline or a mobile crisis team.
3. If it's safe to do so, stay with the person and reassure them until help arrives.
4. Encourage the person to seek ongoing support from community health services or peer networks.

Further Reading

 [Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM](#)

 [A made-in-Canada blueprint for defunding police](#)

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[A Call for National Defunding of Police and Investment in Black Communities](#)

3.0 Harm Reduction and Emergency Response to Drug Overdoses

Harm reduction is more than just a set of policies and procedures. At its core, it is a lifeline.

Recognizing that people will use substances regardless of rules, a harm reduction approach prioritizes human dignity, safety, and compassion. It's about creating spaces where everyone is valued, protected, and seen as worthy of care. By training staff on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a drug overdose and implementing harm reduction protocols for emergency response, venues can recognize their role as nightlife spaces and prioritize collective safety over judgment.



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Art by @street.cats.yyc on Instagram

Setting The Stage

During a concert, a guest collapses. A venue staff member finds her unresponsive but is unsure how to act. A bystander notices the signs of a fentanyl overdose, calls for and administers naloxone, reviving her before emergency services arrive.

Reflection

What harm reduction protocols does your venue have in place for responding to drug overdoses?

Actions

Staff Education and Training

- ▶▶ Train staff to administer naloxone safely and without hesitation.
- ▶▶ Naloxone temporarily reverses opioid overdoses but does not cure them.
- ▶▶ Emphasize the importance of calling 911 for immediate emergency medical attention after administering naloxone.
- ▶▶ Access to naloxone and training is widely available through programs like the Nova Scotia Take Home Naloxone Program.
- ▶▶ Most pharmacies in Nova Scotia can supply free kits as well as provide 10-minute training sessions.

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Implement Policies for Harm Reduction

- ▶▶ Develop zero-stigma policies to promote inclusivity and respect.
- ▶▶ Offer accessible resources like naloxone kits, fentanyl test strips, and educational materials.
- ▶▶ Partner with local organizations and pharmacies to provide free resources and support.

Sharps Bins and Disposal

- ▶▶ You can pick up a free secure sharps bin at your local pharmacy.
- ▶▶ Install sharps disposal bins securely in accessible locations, such as bathrooms, at an accessible height.
- ▶▶ Partner with local organizations for regular collection and safe disposal.



From: Nova Scotia Take Home Naloxone Program

A Naloxone Kit Includes:

- » 2 ampoules of Naloxone
- » 2 Syringes
- » 2 Ampoule Breakers
- » 1 Pocket Breathing Mask
- » 2 Non-latex Gloves
- » 2 Alcohol Swabs
- » 1 Pill Bottle
- » 1 step-by-step instruction pamphlet
- » 1 training card

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Resources

Safe Sharps Distribution Material:

-  [Safe Sharps Brochure](#)
-  [Sharps Poster for Bathrooms](#)
-  [Sharps Don't Belong Here Poster](#)

Local Free Resources

-  [Direction 180](#)
-  [Mainline Needle Exchange](#)
-  [Nova Scotia Take Home Naloxone Program](#)

4.0 Violence in The Workplace

Nightlife should be a fun and safe experience for everyone. Places like music venues, bars, and clubs are where people go to connect, have fun, and relax. But sometimes, things can happen that make these spaces dangerous.

Violence and harm can occur in nightlife spaces for different reasons, like people using alcohol or drugs, crowded spaces where it's easy to bump into each other, dark corners or obstructed views caused by smoke machines, and late-night hours when there are fewer people around.

Types of Violence in Nightlife Spaces

- ▶▶ **Sexual violence** includes unwanted sexual touching, grabbing, or kissing, sexual comments or jokes even if the person doesn't say "no," and sexual assault or rape.
- ▶▶ **Workplace violence** includes physical attacks like hitting, shoving, or kicking, verbal abuse like yelling, insulting, or threatening someone, and threats to harm someone even if no physical violence occurs.
- ▶▶ **Transphobic violence** includes using the wrong pronouns for a transgender person, making fun of someone's gender identity or expression, and physically attacking a transgender person.
- ▶▶ **Racial violence** includes making racist jokes or comments, treating someone differently because of their race or ethnicity, and physically attacking someone because of their race.

There are many different kinds of violence. Each of these types of violence is serious and can have a lasting impact on the people who experience it.

Marginalized groups, like transgender people and racialized people, are more likely to experience violence in nightlife spaces. This is because of discrimination and prejudice that already exists in society.

Safer nightlife spaces mean taking steps to prevent all forms of violence. This includes having clear rules and policies about acceptable behavior, training staff to recognize and respond to violence, designing safe physical spaces, and ensuring everyone feels welcome and respected no matter who they are.

4.1 Workplace Violence Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is about identifying potential risks and creating environments where people feel protected, supported and prepared. Nightlife spaces like bars and music venues have extra challenges.

In Nova Scotia, workplaces have special rules to keep people safe from violence. Just like we use safety signs or wear protective gear, businesses now must carefully look at potential dangers and make plans to prevent them.

The biggest challenges in creating safe spaces include:

- » Understanding what violence can look like in different settings
- » Recognizing that safety isn't just about physical dangers
- » Training staff to identify and respond to potential risks
- » Creating clear plans that everyone understands

Actionable Steps

- Identify Potential Risks
- Look carefully at the workplace or venue
- Talk to staff about their experiences and concerns
- Notice places or situations where problems might happen

Create a Clear Safety Plan

- » Write down specific steps to prevent dangerous situations

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- » Make sure everyone knows what to do if something goes wrong
- » Update the plan regularly based on new information.

Train Staff Thoroughly

- » Teach employees how to recognize warning signs
- » Practice calm and professional ways to handle tense situations
- » Give people tools to protect themselves and others

Keep Records and Learn

- » Document any incidents or near-misses
- » Use this information to improve safety procedures
- » Show that the business takes safety seriously

Follow Legal Requirements

- » Know the local laws about workplace safety
- » Understand that preventing violence is a legal responsibility
- » Be prepared to prove you're taking safety seriously

Resources

-  [Gov. Nova Scotia: What is a Violence Risk Assessment?](#)
-  [Violence in the Workplace: Awareness Free Course](#)
-  [Occupational Health And Safety Assessing the Risk Of Workplace Violence](#)
-  [Violence in the Workplace Regulations made under Section 82 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

5.0 What To Do If You Experience Discrimination at Work: For Arts Sector Workers

This resource is for anyone working in the arts sector in Nova Scotia, including:

- » Venue staff
- » Artists
- » Musicians
- » Performers
- » Consultants
- » Workshop facilitators
- » Anyone working in arts and music-related businesses

The information here applies to all types of work relationships, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract work. This means that even if you are hired for a short time or for a specific project, you still have the same rights as someone with a permanent job.

Knowing your rights arms you with the tools needed to fight against unfair treatment, while finding the support you are entitled to. It explains your rights under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, what discrimination is, and provides you with some clear steps on how to address this through direct communication or through a mediation process.

Have you been the target of workplace discrimination?

Experiencing discrimination can be very upsetting, and it can be scary to stand up for yourself, especially if you don't know your rights or where to start. Here are clear steps you can take if you think you've been discriminated against at work.

Know your rights

- ▶▶ Talk to someone you trust
- ▶▶ Reach out to someone you feel comfortable with, like a friend, family member, colleague, or union representative.
- ▶▶ They can offer support and help you decide what to do next.

Contact the Person Responsible (*optional*)

- ▶▶ If you feel safe doing so, try talking to the person who you believe is discriminating against you.
- ▶▶ Explain what's happening, how it makes you feel, and what you'd like them to do to fix it.
- ▶▶ Writing down any agreement you come to and having everyone sign it can be helpful.

5.1 Filing an Inquiry with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

If talking to the person is not an option or unsuccessful, you can contact the [Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#). An inquiry is not a formal complaint. **Your employer does not need to know about this.** It's a way to tell the Commission about what happened and see if your situation qualifies as a formal complaint.

Filling Out An Inquiry Form Online

The Commission staff will look at your situation and tell you if it meets the requirements to become a formal complaint. For example, it must involve a protected characteristic and have happened in the last 12 months.

[**You Can Use This Free Self-Assessment Tool To Help Determine If Your Complaint Is Eligible**](#)

[**You Can Download The Inquiry Form Here**](#)

What happens during the complaint process?

- ▶▶ If the Commission thinks your inquiry can be a formal complaint, they'll help you file one.
- ▶▶ The Commission might try to help you and the other person resolve the issue through mediation.
- ▶▶ If that doesn't work, your complaint could go to a Board of Inquiry, which is like a legal process that decides if discrimination happened.

You have legally protected rights.

- ▶▶ It's against the law for anyone to retaliate against you for making a complaint.
- ▶▶ This means your employer or co-workers can't punish you for speaking up about discrimination. If they do, you can report it to the Commission.
- ▶▶ Remember, you're not alone and there are resources to support you.

5.2 Steps For Employers

As an employer in the arts sector, you have a legal responsibility to create a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. Some steps you can take:

1. Work with your team to create clear policies and guidelines to address discrimination and harassment
2. Make space for your staff who are part of marginalized communities to share their experiences to help guide you
3. Inform your staff on the Human Rights Act, including the duty to accommodate.
4. Take steps to make your workplace accessible to disabled people.
5. Be proactive in addressing any concerns about discrimination or harassment.

Handling Concerns and Complaints

Not all uncomfortable or negative situations are discrimination. Sometimes, people may have disagreements or personality clashes that are not related to protected characteristics. No matter what the situation, if you receive a complaint, you must take it seriously.

- ▶▶ Listen to the person's concerns.
- ▶▶ Investigate the matter thoroughly.
- ▶▶ Take appropriate action

It is illegal to retaliate against someone for making a complaint of discrimination or harassment.

Resources

If you have questions about the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, the duty to accommodate, or what constitutes as undue hardship, you can contact the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission:

Website: <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca>

Phone: (902) 424-4111

Email: hrcinquiries@novascotia.ca

6.0 Paying Disabled and Low-Income Artists on Income Assistance

Income and Disability Assistance policies in Nova Scotia create significant barriers for disabled and low-income artists. Strict rules severely limit their ability to earn money without risking their benefits. The system caps bank account holdings at \$2,000, including savings and investments, and closely monitors any additional income. This leaves many artists navigating a system that discourages financial stability. Contrary to common belief, the system is not broken. It is operating exactly as intended.

Artists relying on these benefits face serious challenges when accepting work. Even small amounts of income from creative projects can lead to financial insecurity or complete loss of benefits. These policies actively push disabled artists to the margins of their creative communities. The impact goes beyond finances, increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation. This can significantly harm mental health.

Applying for and receiving disability assistance is a complex and lengthy process, with most applications denied. This leaves most disabled artists on basic Income Assistance, with minimal additional disability support tied to strict medical documentation requirements. The reliance on the medical model of disability is inherently ableist, creating significant financial and systemic barriers to getting the required diagnoses. These challenges are made worse by the collapsed state of Nova Scotia's healthcare system.

Setting The Stage

A disabled artist is invited to host a series of technical workshops for a non-profit organization. However, the artist must carefully manage how they accept payment to avoid exceeding income limits, as their bank account is strictly monitored. Payments and e-transfers deposited directly into their account risk triggering a review or suspension of benefits, leaving the artist no choice but to lose career opportunities,

Reflection

How does your venue handle payments to disabled and low-income artists while respecting their restricted financial situations?

Actions

Understand Income Assistance Constraints

Recognize that artists on income assistance may have limits on monthly income and savings.

Be aware of how these policies affect artists' ability to accept traditional payments.

Offer Flexible Payment Options

- ▶▶ Provide alternatives like prepaid Visa, cash, or gift cards to avoid direct bank deposits.
- ▶▶ Break payments into smaller amounts distributed over time to stay within monthly earning thresholds.
- ▶▶ Frame payments as one-time honorariums or stipends to reduce administrative scrutiny.

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Communicate

Make it standard practice to ask artists if they have any limitations or restrictions on receiving payment during the hiring process.

Be transparent and respectful when discussing payment options, to maintain privacy and dignity.

Train staff to handle these conversations with sensitivity and provide clear explanations of available options.

Resources

-  [Nova Scotia Income Assistance Policy Manual](#)
-  [Halifax Examiner: Nova Scotians on Income Assistance Worse Off](#)
-  [The Coast: The Perils of Poverty for the Physically Disabled](#)

Glossary Of Terms

Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

This is a law that protects people from discrimination. It applies to many areas of life, including jobs, housing, and services. It says that everyone should be treated fairly, no matter their age, race, religion, gender, disability, and other personal characteristics.

Protected Characteristics

These are personal traits that the law says you cannot be discriminated against for having. They include things like your age, race, religion, gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

Discrimination

This is when someone treats you unfairly because of a personal characteristic, like your disability, race, gender, or sexual orientation. For Example, it would be discrimination if a venue refused to hire you because you take medication for depression.

Duty to Accommodate

Employers and service providers have a legal duty to make changes to their workplace to help disabled staff participate fully. This might include modifying job duties or providing assistive devices. For example, a sound technician cannot refuse to set up a hard of hearing singers personal in-ear-monitoring system.

Undue Hardship

is a situation where providing an accommodation for a disabled worker becomes excessively difficult or expensive for the employer or service provider. There's no set formula for determining undue hardship. Each case is evaluated individually, considering factors like:

- » The financial cost of the accommodation
- » Safety concerns for the employee, other workers, and the public
- » The size and nature of the organization
- » Potential disruption of services or agreement

If you and your employer cannot agree on what constitutes undue hardship, seeking legal advice or contacting the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission is recommended.

Restorative Board of Inquiry (mediation)

The Board of Inquiry might use a special format called a talking circle to encourage communication and find solutions that work for everyone. If the Board decides that discrimination happened, they can tell the other person to change their policies or pay you compensation.

4B. THE HUMAN CAPACITY AUDIT TOOL

Here is a [link to a printable version](#) of this audit tool.

This is a tool for nightlife and performance spaces to evaluate how well they support workplace well-being, safety, and inclusivity. It covers areas like fair pay, career opportunities, and mental health resources while addressing key issues such as violence prevention, harm reduction, and mental health crisis response. Through a series of leading questions, venues can begin to identify gaps and work towards creating safer, more supportive environments for staff, patrons and guest performers.

How do we make safer nightlife spaces?

- Take proactive steps to promote well-being and prevent harm.
- Re-examine existing policies
- Create clear policies for violence risk assessment and harm reduction.
- Make policies accessible and inclusive for staff, performers, and patrons.
- Regularly review and improve practices based on feedback.
- Collaborate with community experts for better resources and support.

Disclaimer

This tool is meant to help music and arts spaces reflect on the internal operations and how they impact workplace well-being and inclusivity. It's not a substitute for professional advice, nor is it a comprehensive assessment. Any internal changes should be made with input from trusted professionals and in collaboration with the communities the policies aim to support. The questions are designed to guide self-assessment and identify areas for growth.

1.0 Psychological Safety and Wellbeing in The Workplace

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace offer fair wages that meet or exceed a living wage, making sure that all staff can afford basic needs like housing, food, and healthcare?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace offer meaningful support for staff facing food or housing insecurity, like living wages, rent assistance, benefits, or partnerships with community resources?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are contract-based workers, like consultants, touring musicians, and collaborators paid fairly and on time, with transparent agreements and access to necessary workplace supports?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace provide fair opportunities for career growth, like training, promotions, or mentorship, that are accessible to all employees, including those from marginalized groups?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace regularly review wages and benefits, so they stay competitive and fair for all employees?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace have clear policies on mental health and wellness, including resources for counseling, peer support, or stress management?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff trained to recognize and address systemic discrimination (e.g., racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism) within the workplace?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are workplace policies designed to recognize and address compounding barriers faced by individuals with intersecting identities, such as racialized 2SLGBTQIA+ employees or disabled women?

9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do marginalized groups, including racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, or disabled employees, feel represented in leadership roles or decision-making processes?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does leadership actively promote an inclusive workplace culture, including zero-tolerance policies for microaggressions and clear consequences for violations?
11.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do you have a confidential process for reporting events and concerns, particularly for staff who are part of marginalized communities who may face unique challenges or fear retaliation?
12.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your organization support employees in understanding how their work contributes to the organization's success and set clear expectations of their roles and how to achieve them?
13.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do staff feel comfortable expressing concerns about workload, accessibility needs, or interpersonal dynamics without fear of retaliation or financial loss?
14.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are flexible work options, like remote work or adjusted hours, available to support employees with caregiving or other personal responsibilities?
15.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are disabled employees supported through individualized accommodations, like flexible work arrangements or assistive technologies?
16.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace provide mentorship or leadership development opportunities specifically for disabled employees in addition to meeting their accommodation needs?
17.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are built-environment accessibility audits conducted regularly to identify and address physical barriers in the workplace?

18.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are adaptive-environment accessibility audits conducted regularly to identify and address attitudinal and psychological health barriers in the workplace?
19.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are mental health accommodations available and normalized, like time off for therapy or wellness days?
20.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are onboarding processes designed to help new employees feel safe, welcomed, and informed about workplace policies on mental well-being and accessibility?
21.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace offer regular training on anti-oppression, conflict resolution, de-escalation, active listening, and empathy for staff members?
22.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are employee surveys and feedback mechanisms used to gather anonymous feedback on psychological safety, and are action steps taken based on the results?
23.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are trauma-informed practices embedded into daily operations, like addressing burnout, debriefing staff after a stressful event, or providing access to support resources?
24.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace have systems in place to address interpersonal conflicts or crises, including trauma-informed debriefs and resources for affected employees?

2.0 Sexual, Workplace, and Gender-Based Violence Risk Assessments

1.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Partial	Does your venue conduct regular risk assessments to identify and address potential violence risks, like physical safety issues, high-risk areas, or patterns of harmful behavior?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue have clear and accessible policies addressing all types of violence with detailed steps for reporting and responding to incidents?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the policies address behaviors like harassment, stalking, drink tampering, or other forms of sexual violence?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the policies explicitly name, and address discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, or other intersecting identities, including homophobia, transphobia, and systemic inequities?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Do the policies outline protocols for managing physical aggression or verbal abuse in the workplace?
6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are policies on violence prevention and response visible to staff, performers, and patrons, including online and within the venue?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your workplace provide staff with regular training on de-escalation, bystander intervention, and trauma-informed responses?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue have a confidential and accessible reporting system for violence or harassment, such as text lines, private forms, or designated staff members?
9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are incident reports reviewed regularly to identify patterns, address recurring issues, and improve safety measures?

3.0 Harm Reduction Protocols

1.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue have a plan to respond to drug overdoses, including naloxone kits and clear steps for staff?
2.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff trained to spot overdose signs, use naloxone, and call 911?
3.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue provide harm reduction tools like sharps bins, fentanyl test strips, or information for staff and patrons?
4.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue work with local groups or pharmacies to provide free naloxone kits, training, or other support?
5.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are sharps disposal bins placed in easy-to-reach locations like bathrooms, and emptied safely?

4.0 Responding to Mental Health Crises and Alternatives to Police Intervention

6.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue have a plan for mental health crises that includes crisis teams, hotlines, and other community-based supports, while addressing the risks for marginalized groups?
7.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff trained to assess safety during a mental health crisis, understand risks for Black, Indigenous, and marginalized groups, and decide when police intervention is necessary?
8.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue provide information about local crisis services, including resources for racialized and disabled communities?

9.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Are staff trained in de-escalation and trauma-informed care, with a focus on supporting racialized and disabled people?
10.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partial	Does your venue work with community organizations that support racialized, disabled, or marginalized groups to improve mental health crisis responses?

Strengths/Areas for Improvement:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mental Health and Wellness Resources for Music Industry Professionals and Their Families

1. Unison Fund

Website: unisonfund.ca

Support Hotline: 1-855-986-4766

2. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Contact: 9-8-8

Available 24/7, bilingual, and trauma informed. Provides mental health and suicide prevention support.

3. Sound Minds

Website: ecma.com/health-wellness

An initiative by the East Coast Music Association, offering mental health and wellness resources for East Coast music professionals.

4. Backline Care

Website: backline.care

a hub of mental health and wellness resources specifically for the music industry, supporting professionals and their families.

5. SoundCheck Mental Health Survey

Website: revelios.com

A survey designed to assess mental health trends in the music industry. The accompanying toolkit is available in the additional resources folder.

Mental Health Works (Canadian Mental Health Association) has tools to help workplaces support mental health.

Website: <https://www.mentalhealthworks.ca>

Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap provides free resources to help create and implement a psychological health and safety strategy at your workplace.

Website: <https://www.wsps.ca/resource-hub/mental-harm-prevention-roadmap>

Anti-Oppression Training

Ann Divine offers training on human rights education and training, sexual harassment training, mental health in the workplace, employee engagement & cultural intelligence, unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion, and leadership development.

Phone: 902-441-3999

Email: ann@ashantileadership.com

Website: www.ashantileadership.com

T.K. Manyimo offers training on allyship; anti-Black racism; bullying and harassment in the workplace; cultural awareness; developing a diversity and inclusion strategy; equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace:

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Starting a Courageous Conversation; human rights awareness; introduction to global diversity, equity, and inclusion benchmarks; and understanding microaggressions.

Phone: 902-489-3469

Email: tk@shumbaconsulting.ca

Website: www.shumbaconsulting.ca

Huwaida Medani offers training on cultural competency, unpacking privileges, the intersection of gender and race in the workplace, minding your bias when hiring, and stereotypes.

Phone: 902-789-8498

Email: huwaidamedani@yahoo.com

Angela Simmonds offers training on helping organizations and employees build understanding in cultural competency, building healthy relationships within teams, and ensuring policies, practices, and processes build more equitable organizations.

Phone: 902-401-4805

Email: angela@ateamcoaching.ca

Website: <https://www.ateamcoaching.ca/>

Buhle Dlamini offers training on leading difference differently, leveraging cultural intelligence, and creating an inclusive culture.

Phone: 902-759-7219

E-mail: buhle@tomorrowtodayglobal.com

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The Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association (VANSDA) offers training on overcoming histories and building cultural competency and a welcoming workplace.

Contact: Robert French

Phone: 902-678-7410 (Ext. 206)

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) has information about creating inclusive workplaces.

Website: <https://www.ccdi.ca>

Chrysalis Human Rights Agency offers training on anti-racist education, unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, conflict resolution, policy audits, and EDI strategic plan development. Services in French are available.

Email: hello@chrysalishragency.com

Website: <https://www.chrysalishragency.com/>

Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Support

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre offers Indigenous cultural training and blanket exercises.

Contact: **Elder Debbie Eisan**, Community Planner

Email: eisandeb@gmail.com

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Contact: **Cheyenne Labrador-Gates**, Executive Assistant

Email: cheyenne.labrador.gates@gmail.com

Phone: 902-420-1576

Cheryl Maloney offers reconciliation teachings and blanket exercises.

The Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre and Our Children and Our Way

Population Served

- Aboriginal/Metis/Inuit
- Isolated

Programs/Services

- Child development delays
- Family Support
- Food security assistance
- Literacy/language development
- Positive parenting
- Provision of resources (e.g., toy lending, resource library, clothing, baby equipment)

Contact

Lee Merrigan-Thomas

Telephone: (902) 422-7850

Fax: (902) 422-6642

Email: mcdcahs@ns.aliantzinc.ca

Website: <http://mymnfc.com> [New Window](#)

2SLGBTQIA+

Nolan Pike is a professional development and LGBTQ+ consultant.

Phone: 902-488-8106

Email: nolan.workshops@gmail.com

Website: <http://equityeducate.com/>

The Youth Project offers training on creating affirming spaces; Intro to the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community; Intro to the 2STGNC Community; and more. The training can be customized.

Phone: 902-429-5429

Email: education@youthproject.ns.ca

Website: <http://youthproject.ns.ca>

Queer CREATIVE NETWORK supports LGBTQ2S+ creatives and communities.

Website: <https://curatedbyq.com/>

Neurodivergent Supports

Autism Nova Scotia is an organization that supports autistic people and their families.

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Sexual Violence Prevention and Support

The Avalon Sexual Assault Center offers training on responding to disclosures of sexual violence; what sexualized violence is and programs and services available; trauma-informed practice; bystander intervention; and creating safer communities.

Phone: 902-422-4240

Email: avaloneducation@avaloncentre.ca

Website: www.avaloncentre.ca

Accessibility

The Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate has tools and training about meeting accessibility standards.

Website: <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/>

The Community ACCESS-Ability Program offers cost-shared grants to community groups for accessibility-related capital improvements.

The Rick Hansen Foundation gives tools and certifications to help make workplaces open to everyone.

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Website: <https://www.rickhansen.com>

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has resources for accessibility.

Website: <https://www.ccohs.ca>

Financial Support and Employment

The Disability Support Program (DSP) in Nova Scotia serves children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness, and physical disabilities. The DSP offers a range of programs, including community-based, residential, and vocational/day programs. These programs are designed to help people become more independent.

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/index.html>

The Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) lets families save money for disabled people. This money grows tax-free.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/registered-disability-savings-plan-rdsp.html>

Nova Scotia Works Employment Services helps people find jobs and can help you ask for changes at work to help with a disability.

Website: <https://www.novascotia.ca/employmentnovascotia/>

Income Assistance Program (IA) provides financial support to eligible Nova Scotians who need it.

Housing

The Disability Support Program (DSP) offers a variety of programs to help disabled people find a place to live, including:

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/index.html>

Alternative Family Support Program supports disabled people living in an approved, private family home.

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/AlternativeFamilySupport.html>

Independent Living Support provides funding to people who need support to live on their own.

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/IndependentLiving.html>

Licensed Homes For Special Care provide support and supervision in homes with three or more beds.

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/HomesForSpecialCare.html>

Flex Program gives money to adults with disabilities to help them live at home or on their own.

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/disabilities/FlexProgram.html>

Moving to Community - For Persons with Disabilities is a program that can help you move out of an institution.

Legal Rights and Anti-Discrimination

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission provides information about the duty to accommodate, which means making changes to include disabled people. The Commission also has resources about anti-discrimination.

Website: <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca>