FORESTRY INNOVATION INVESTMENT

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

APRIL 2024

Forestry Innovation Investment®

Land acknowledgement

Our work involves natural resources which impact many Indigenous communities located in or closely associated with forests across the Province of British Columbia. We recognize their connection to the forests and are grateful to those on whose traditional lands we reside, work, or visit.

In the spirit of reconciliation, FII acknowledges that its head office is situated in the traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), and Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.
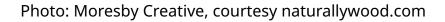
Photo: Moresby Creative, courtesy naturallywood.com

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Introduction

Forestry Innovation Investment (FII) is a Crown agency of the Government of British Columbia. Our mandate is to maintain, create and diversify markets for B.C. forest products. In doing our work, FII works with a wide range of stakeholders, including the forest industry, research institutions, governments, and Indigenous organizations. Together, we help ensure the forest sector continues to support jobs and contribute to the provincial economy. For further information on FII and its programs, visit bcfii.ca.

FII recognizes that our work impacts our stakeholders in different ways. We also recognize that stakeholders have diverse needs, resources and capacities. In response, we consider these differences and work to ensure equitable access when delivering information, programs and services. We believe in encouraging innovation and making a positive impact—socially, economically and environmentally.

This document outlines FII's commitments to accessibility. It outlines how we will expand our knowledge and reduce barriers in our workplace culture, policies, programs and activities. It summarizes our work to date and lists our forward-looking priorities. We recognize that as an organization we are still learning and, therefore, there may be updates to this Plan as we move forward.

FII welcomes feedback on this Plan as well as on our general programs and operations. Should you wish to provide feedback, please contact accessibility@bcfii.ca.

Frameworks Guiding FII's Accessibility Work

FII activities are guided, in part, by the [Accessible BC Act](). The Act applies to government as a whole and Crown agencies like FII. To improve accessibility, the Act requires that FII:

- establishes an accessibility committee,

- develops an accessibility plan, and

- creates a tool to receive public feedback on accessibility.[1]

Further guidance is provided by the [B.C. Government's Accessibility Plan.]() The plan lists barriers (see Appendix) that those with disabilities may face and how the government and Crown agencies will respond in the 2022-25 period.

FII also receives direction on accessibility issues through its [mandate letter](). The letter provides clarity on FII priorities and activities. The current letter mandates FII to support the Province's efforts in addressing systematic discrimination by adopting a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) (GBA+) lens to policies and programs. In 2020, FII undertook a GBA+ analysis to identify any unintended barriers to its policies and programs. This review provided the foundation for FII's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and accessibility efforts, beginning with the development of Corporate [GBA+]() and [DEI]() statements.

FII's [Standard of Conduct policy]() is based in part on the Province of B.C.'s Standards of Conduct. The policy aligns with the B.C. Human Rights Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act. FII staff receive annual training on the Policy, which includes respectful workplace behaviour.

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[1] Further details related to these requirements can be found within the [Accessible BC Act]().

FII Accessibility Committee

In 2021, FII set up a DEI Working Group of employees. The working group covers 25 percent of current staffing levels and reflects the diversity of FII staff. It works to help address barriers/concerns and advance DEI objectives.

In 2024, FII established an Accessibility Committee to work with the DEI working group on accessibility-related goals and priorities within FII. As prescribed by the Accessible BC Act, more than half of the committee is made of persons with disabilities.

Definitions

Note: FII has drawn these definitions from a variety of sources and acknowledges that there are multiple ways to explain different terms.

Barrier: anything that hinders full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment. Barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and can be affected by intersecting forms of discrimination or bias.

Diversity: the presence of "difference", such as in identities, thoughts or lived experiences of people. Diversity of identity refers to the factors that make up who we are, including our gender identity or expression, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, ancestry, place of origin, political beliefs, religion, marital status, family status, physical capacity, mental capacity, age, and socio-economic conditions, as examples.

Equity: the fair treatment of all people. Being equitable recognizes that measures may be required to address the disparities associated with social and historical disadvantages. In other words, people are treated fairly but different measures or actions may be necessary to reduce gaps between different groups of people.

Inclusion: creating conditions where those who have historically felt excluded feel like they can bring their authentic selves to work and participate fully. Inclusion means everyone feels valued and respected for their unique identities. Inclusion relates to the quality of the human experience. Inclusion requires equity—a conscious effort to ensure everyone feels safe and valued.

Neurodiversity: the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, realizing that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways. Neurodiversity is categorized as neurotypical and neurodivergent, including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Autism and ADHD.

For other commonly used definitions, visit the [BC Accessibility Hub](#).

FII Accessibility Priorities

Foster a Culture of Accessibility

FII fosters a culture of inclusivity and equity, with a strong commitment to continuous improvement and learning. This commitment is highlighted in the "People" value of the [Mission and Values statement](). This value is cultivated and demonstrated through FII policies and programs and the active participation of FII leadership and staff in advancing DEI-related topics.

Priorities

- Review annual DEI and Accessibility Plans to assess progress and establish forward-looking priorities.
- Undertake regular internal and external assessments of FII programs and policies with a DEI/GBA+ lens.
- Review recruitment practices to ensure they are inclusive and to audit for potential biases.
- Conduct confidential, voluntary and anonymous staff surveys on a recurring basis to collect diversity disaggregated data.
- Raise awareness and understanding of accessibility-related topics amongst staff and stakeholders.

Actions to Date

- In 2023/24, FII undertook a third-party DEI assessment. The review of policies and practices helped identify unintended barriers, build diverse representation, and establish equitable and inclusive practices.

- FII conducted a staff survey in March 2024, which included accessibility-related questions.

- FII completed its 2024/25 DEI and Accessibility Plans, informed by the outcomes of both the assessment and staff survey.

- FII's annual DEI staff training calendar includes accessibility-related topics such as inclusive language, accessibility in communications and Mental Health First Aid.

- Key dates of recognition are shared with staff to create awareness and share resources. These events include World Mental Health Day, Neurodiversity Week and Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

- In 2023/24, staff received further accessibility training. Topics included accessible communications training for communications staff and Accessibility and Inclusion in the Workplace for staff joining the Accessibility Committee.

Next Steps

- Identify and deliver accessibility-related training to FII staff.

- Recognize key accessibility dates and provide further resources to staff.

- Address accessibility-related recommendations identified in the 23/24 DEI assessment and staff survey.

- Review accessibility plans of other public sector organizations to identify gaps in, and continue to improve upon, FII's Accessibility Plan.

Promote Inclusive Program Delivery

Working with stakeholders to identify and understand the barriers that underrepresented groups face is important to improving accessibility and achieving DEI goals.

Priorities

- Engage with government, Crown and industry partners on accessibility and broader DEI topics.
- Review the accessibility of FII's programs for diverse groups.

Actions to Date

- FII now lists DEI requirements in its Call for Proposals for funding programs. Resources and training on DEI have been provided to proponents to aid in their submissions.
- FII continues to engage with government, industry and Crowns on DEI/Accessibility-related topics. This has included the sharing of

DEI/accessibility plans and strategies to compare approaches and best practices.

Next Steps

- Continue to include DEI in FII's Call for Proposals (CFP) requirements.
- Assess the CFP process and documentation to ensure accessibility, with changes as needed.

Create an Accessible Physical Environment

Creating a more accessible workspace is a first step for many accessibility initiatives. Doing so provides a tangible example of the organization's commitment to accessibility and DEI goals.

Priorities

- Assess and make upgrades to improve the accessibility of FII's physical office space.

- Support the workspace needs of those with disabilities to make their work environment more accessible.

- Consider the accessibility requirement of external stakeholders participating in FII-led meetings/events.

Actions to Date

- In 2023/24, FII conducted an office accessibility audit of the Vancouver office through the Rick Hansen Foundation to determine suggested/needed upgrades.

- New ergonomics guidelines ensure staff are working efficiently in a safe and comfortable environment. Ergonomics assessments are conducted by an external consultant to provide recommendations on adjustments required to individual workspaces.

- Policies have been updated to ensure that accessibility is considered when booking external events. Staff are encouraged to follow best practices for inclusive meetings.

- FII's Emergency Response Plan includes aiding those with accessibility needs during an emergency situation.

Next Steps

- Make improvements to FII's physical office space to improve accessibility based on the 2023/24 office assessment.

- Communicate physical office space recommendations to FII's landlord, for common areas/facilities outside of FII's office but within the building.

- Develop accessibility guidelines for on- and off-site meetings/events.

Improve Accessible Information and Communications

Communication accessibility is crucial for ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, can access and use documents and other information sources effectively.

Priorities

- Assess and make improvements to FII websites and corporate documents to ensure accessibility.

- Enhance and build staff knowledge of document accessibility and technology.

- Establish best practices for creating accessible documents.

- Ensure accessible meeting options are available for staff and stakeholders.

Actions to Date

- Implemented virtual meeting options for staff/stakeholders. This includes the required A/V equipment in boardrooms and providing access to, and educating staff on, the use of online meeting platforms.

- In 2022/23, completed an accessibility review of FII's corporate documents and digital assets. Updates were undertaken in 2023/24.

- Added ability to create accessible documents/websites as a desirable criteria in FII's Design Services Request for Qualifications.

- In 2023/24, reviewed the corporate website to identify changes needed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (2.2), level AA standards.

- In 2023/24, audited naturally:wood, a key FII communications platform and developed revised brand guidelines for visual and digital applications.

- In 2023, provided a training session on accessible digital documents to staff, including an overview on standards, testing tools, assistive technologies and best practices.

Next Steps

- Undertake updates to the FII website, bcfii.ca, based on recommendations from the 23/24 accessibility audit.

- Create accessible corporate templates, brand standards and guidelines for staff and contractors.

- Review and update FII corporate materials using B.C.'s plain language guidelines.

- Apply updated 23/24 naturally:wood brand guidelines, as well as other website accessibility best practices, to a new naturallywood.com website (to be developed in 2024/25).

Summary of Key Action Items

2024/25 Priority Action Items

Organizational Culture

- Identify and deliver accessibility-related training to FII staff.

- Continue to identify and prioritize accessibility resources, expertise and contractors.

- Recognize key accessibility dates of importance and provide further resources to staff.

- Address recommendations identified in the 23/24 DEI assessment and staff survey related to accessibility.

- Undertake stakeholder consultations and an environmental scan of other public organizations' accessibility plans to identify gaps in, and continue to improve upon, FII's Accessibility Plan.

Promote Inclusive Program Delivery

- Continue to include DEI requirements in FII's CFP requirements.

- Assess and remediate as required the accessibility of FII's CFP documentation for proponents.

Physical Environment

- Based on the 23/24 office assessment, make improvements to FII's physical office space to improve accessibility.

- Develop accessibility guidelines for on- and off-site meetings/events.

Information and Communications

- Make changes to FII's website, bcfii.ca, based on recommendations from the 23/24 accessibility audit.

- Create accessible corporate templates, brand standards and guidelines for staff and contractors.

- Review and update FII corporate materials using B.C.'s [plain language guidelines](#).
- Apply updated brand guidelines to new naturallywood.com website.

Reporting Framework

To ensure progress on this Plan, the DEI Working Group and Accessibility Committee meet monthly to discuss the status of project priorities. Updates are provided to FII executive and all staff at monthly staff meetings. FII's priorities and progress related to DEI and accessibility are reported to FII's Board of Directors on a quarterly basis with the Board providing strategic guidance on FII's approach. At the end of each year, a report on all outcomes against priorities is completed alongside the development of the next annual Plan.

Appendix

Key Accessibility Barriers[2]

Attitudinal: When people think and act based upon false assumptions, such as making decisions about people with disabilities without including them, or not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce.

Physical: When obstacles in an environment make access difficult, such as hosting inaccessible events or meeting spaces, or a washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener.

Information or communication: When disabled people are excluded because they use other ways to communicate, such as using small print or not providing large-print versions of material, or videos, events, or meetings that do not have closed captions.

Systemic: When an organization's policies, practices, or procedures result in exclusion, such as not providing an American Sign Language interpreter or requiring a driver's license for a job that could be reorganized to use another form of transportation.

Technology: When technology can't be accessed by people with disabilities, such as websites, documents, or databases that are not accessible for screen readers, or graphs and charts that are posted without text to explain them.

Sensory: When sensory information such as lights, sounds, and smells prevent participation in the environment, such as co-workers wearing perfume in the workplace or the use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace.

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[2] Source: [B.C. Government Accessibility Plan](#)