



**Becoming an
Access-Friendly Organization:
A TOOLKIT**

Increasing Access to Physical Activity for All



Becoming An Access-Friendly Organization

Created by:
Partners of the Health for Life Family Working Group

October 2011



Becoming an Access- Friendly Organization

WELCOME! This toolkit is designed to help volunteer- based organizations increase registration by removing financial barriers to participation and increasing accessibility for everyone.

Access includes knowing what programs and subsidies exist in your community and being able to participate physically and financially in them. Being an access- friendly organization means breaking down barriers and making it easier for people to take part in your program or activity.

This toolkit has been created with sport and recreation organizations in mind, but can benefit other community groups as well. In this resource, the following steps are outlined on how to become an access-friendly organization (AFO):

- Understand the importance of being an AFO
- Agree to take action
- Understand your resources
- Develop a policy
- Maintain confidentiality of information
- Communicate your access-friendly policies
- Review your progress

The Health for Life* Family Working Group, which works to improve access to recreation opportunities in the City of Kawartha Lakes, wants to:

- Work with program/service providers to develop policies that help everyone access recreation
- Eliminate access to equipment as a barrier
- Promote free opportunities for physical activity
- Make the process to access financial support easier
- Promote the benefits of physical activity

Removing barriers to access is a shared responsibility. As community leaders, we will continue to build local partnerships to remove barriers and create opportunities for everyone to participate!

***Partners in this initiative include:*

Big Brothers Big Sisters Kawartha Lakes – Haliburton
Boys and Girls Clubs of Kawartha Lakes
Community Living Kawartha Lakes
GAMIING Nature Centre
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
Lindsay Wildcats Basketball Association
Safe Communities Kawartha Lakes

This toolkit has been created based on resources developed by:

- H.E.A.R.T. (Helping Everyone Access Recreation Together)
- Parks and Recreation Ontario
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association

WHY BECOME AN ACCESS-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATION?

Affordable access to recreation for families is an important social policy issue. Significant work has been done across Canada, Ontario and in this area to advocate to all levels of government and community groups that policies, funding and broad approaches are needed to increase access. Research has demonstrated the social and economic benefits of investing in access to recreation.

Recreation...

...has physical health benefits. Recreation that includes physical activity lowers the rates of illness and obesity.

...has psychosocial benefits. Recreation can foster life skills for success at school, work and home; reduce emotional problems and risky behaviour; improve self esteem; create positive peer and family relationships; and increase opportunities for fun and enjoyment.

...can help to break the cycle of poverty. Poverty is a key factor that affects health and impacts rates of unintentional injuries, mental health issues, poor eating habits and physical activity. Being excluded from community-based recreation programs is both a result of and a contributor to cyclical and generational poverty. When children and youth are regularly involved in structured, skill-building recreational activities that develop self esteem, they are more resilient and better protected against the risks of low success in school and the labour market. According to the HKPR District Health Unit's Rethink Poverty report (www.rethinkpoverty.ca), poverty is a problem that exists in our community. Lack of income negatively affects the health of individuals, especially children who live in poverty.

...is a wise financial investment. In achieving the benefits described above, access to recreation results in cost savings for health, social services, and justice. In addition, savings in tax dollars have been found when people find employment and no longer need to rely on social assistance.

¹Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework Guide. Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation. www.proontario.org

²"Why Be Out There: Health Benefits", www.nwf.org/get-outside/be-out-there/why-be-out-there/benefits.aspx

³Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Framework Guide. Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation. www.proontario.org

An AFO makes every effort to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

An Access-Friendly Organization believes:

- Everyone has the right to participate
- All participants are treated with dignity and respect
- Affordable programs are a priority
- Personal information is kept confidential

Access-Friendly Organizations can address barriers to participation in the following ways:

- Write and promote policies that reflect their beliefs
- Commit resources to provide financial assistance
- Work with other community partners to communicate existing opportunities
- Promote and participate in the exchange of used equipment

“Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

- John Wooden, American basketball player and coach

For an example of how to capture your organization’s beliefs and values, see *Appendix A: Statement of Organizational Values*



UNDERSTAND YOUR RESOURCES

Before your organization determines how it will provide opportunities and financial support to assist with increasing participation, you should take an inventory of your resources. At no time should an access-friendly organization compromise its own sustainability by providing assistance.

In every organization, it is important to establish a budget in order to ensure that your organization is financially sound.

- Does your organization have a budget?
- Does your organization have a budget that considers the true costs in simple form?
- Does your organization know the amount of funds required to be sustainable for the next season?
- Does your organization have fundraising fees attached to it?
- Does your organization understand the true cost-per-participant?

Each organization's expenses will be different based on the sport/program that is provided. When developing your costs, consider some of the following: staffing, instructors, coaches, trainers, referees, equipment, supplies, promotions, marketing, advertising, facility rentals, utilities, phone, information technology/computer costs, affiliation costs, insurance, membership fees, and miscellaneous. Revenue items could include: registrations, sponsorship, advertising revenue, donations, grants, sales, and other revenue sources particular to your organization.

Are you ready?

Consider:

- Use the budget templates provided in the toolkit. See *Appendix B: Sample Budget*
- Determine a specific number of spaces for subsidy allocation.
- Use the true cost-per-participant as a subsidy base.
- Share available resources and spaces with Jump Start or other community support organizations.



Ensuring that an organization continues to be access-friendly requires that policies are written, published and followed. It is important in community-run organizations for policies and practices to be carried forward when leadership changes.

- Does your organization have a policy?
- Does your organization understand that changes in leadership can mean changes to policy and practices?
- Does your organization believe in transparent delivery of services?
- Does your organization understand why it is important for everyone to be aware of these policies and practices?

Are you ready?

Consider:

- Create a direct fee subsidy policy. See guidelines in *Appendix C: Developing a Fee Subsidy Policy*
- Create policies that incorporate other forms of assistance:
 - Post-dated cheques: allow parents to divide the fees over several months (Eg Aug 1st, Sept 1st and Oct 1st)
 - Canteen shifts: allow parents to take shifts that other parents are not volunteering for, and credit them the amount towards their participation.
 - Fundraising/Corporate Sponsorship
 - Coaching/volunteering: provide credit to parents for their time spent volunteering or coaching.
 - Multiple child discount: offer a rebate for families that are registering more than one child.
 - Refer a friend discount.
 - Provide financial support to other subsidy organizations (i.e. Kid Sport, Jump Start, etc.). Participants would then be directed to these agencies for support.
 - Equipment loan
 - Organized car pools
 - Trial period or lower introductory rate
 - Basic skills training/orientation prior to registering/paying fees

For sample access policies, see *Appendix D: Sample Access Policies*

CONFIDENTIALITY: APPROPRIATE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Current legislation requires that boundaries be placed on how personal information is handled and how much information is disclosed and to whom. A participant disclosing personal information has the right to reasonably expect his or her privacy to be protected. This is particularly true when dealing with applications for financial assistance. When families and/or individuals provide information to a sport/recreation organization, they need assurances that the personal information provided is treated confidentially. It is important to determine which person in your organization will have access to registration and subsidy application forms, and who will administer subsidy agreements/financial support.

Are you ready?

Consider:

- Ask your executive to create a confidentiality statement for your leadership team.
- Add a *Notice of Collection of Personal Information* statement to your registration and subsidy application forms.
- Ensure all organizational members with access to personal information sign off on the confidentiality statement.
- Introduce a training module related to handling personal information.

For a copy of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, click here:
(www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90f31_e.htm#BK54)

For assistance to determine if your organization meets privacy law requirements, click here:
(www.priv.gc.ca/resource/tool-outil/security-securite/english/AssessRisks.asp?x=1)



COMMUNICATE YOUR POLICY

In order to increase participation, an organization should promote the fact that it is access-friendly and has developed resources and written policies to eliminate financial barriers.

Are you ready?

Consider:

- Promote the policy through an introductory letter to participants and at registration.
- Advise others about your access policies, including local social service agencies, parks and recreation department, advisory boards or facility renters.
- Develop new marketing materials, information packages and posters. Include your policy on the Join In City of Kawartha Lakes (www.joininckl.ca) website.
- Connect your AFO policy to existing policies, procedures and bylaws.
- Add a note to all communication materials.

“Set your goals high and don’t stop until you get there.”

- Bo Jackson, American football and baseball player



REVIEW YOUR PROGRESS

Self-review is the careful collection of information about a program, or some aspect of a program, to make necessary decisions about the program. Information gathered can be used to assess policy or program need, effectiveness, efficiency, and cost/benefit analysis.

Questions to consider:

- Why is the review being done? (E.g. what do you want to know?)
- Who will be involved in the review? (E.g. board members, volunteers, participants)
- What kind of information is needed to understand how to improve the policy/program? (E.g. registration numbers, participant feedback on application process, etc.)
- How can that information be collected? (E.g. phone interviews, surveys, focus groups)
- Who should you share the review results with, and to whom are they most relevant? (E.g. funders, board members, participants)

Are you ready?

Consider:

- Are you being recognized as an Access-Friendly Organization?
- Do participants know about and understand your access policy?
- Ask questions in your self-review about participant's experience with the process of asking for assistance.
- Ask open-ended questions to gather more feedback.
- Review your access policy on a regular basis.



OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Healthy Additions to Your Policy:

- Has your organization considered adopting a tobacco-free policy? This means participants, spectators, coaches and leaders do not smoke, snuff, dip or chew tobacco while engaged in the activities of your organization. For a free copy of *Play, Live, Be...Tobacco-Free: A Guide for Developing Tobacco-Free Sport and Recreation Policies and Bylaws*, contact the HKPR District Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577.
- Has your organization considered adopting a food policy that would apply to the types of foods served at events and sold in fundraising campaigns or at the snack bar? For more information, visit the Eat Smart Recreation website (www.eatsmartontario.ca/recreation_centre) or contact the HKPR District Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577.
- Has your organization considered creating a policy that would govern the use of alcohol at sports events, team banquets, fundraising activities etc.? Contact the HKPR District Health Unit for more information at 1-866-888-4577.

Be Inclusive:

- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* outlines the guidelines and expectations of non-profit and for-profit organizations. The *Accessible Customer Service Standards* are a minimum that all organizations should strive to provide. For more information on the accessible customer service standards and how you can encourage everyone to participate, visit these links:
 - City of Kawartha Lakes
www.city.kawarthalakes.on.ca/residents/accessibility
 - Ministry of Community and Social Services
www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/index.aspx
- Make an explicit statement in your organizational beliefs that you have a willingness to accommodate all participants.

Additional Tips & Resources:

- Would your organization benefit from being able to access school facilities? If so, contact your local school board for information on community access to schools.
- For tips on injury prevention and sun safety, visit www.joininckl.ca
- To access or advertise used sports equipment in good condition, use the equipment swap on www.joininckl.ca
- Do you require criminal reference checks from your executive members/volunteers? If so, who pays for the check and how often must it be updated? If not, should you? For information on how to apply for a criminal reference check, contact your local police service.

- **The Physical Activity Resource Centre – Policy Development Workbook**
<http://parc.ophea.net/sites/default/files/pdfs/PARC-policy-Workbook.pdf>
- **Every Child Plays: Access to Recreation for Low Income Families in Ontario Promising Practices Guide** (November 2007)
Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families
- **Affordable Access to Recreation for Ontarians Policy Development and Implementation Guide for Communities** (2010)
Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families
- **National Policy-Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families** (October 2005)
Canadian Parks and Recreation Association - www.cpra.ca
- **Reaching for the Top: A Report by the Advisor on Healthy Children and Youth, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Health Canada** (2007)
Kellie K. Leitch - www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/child-enfant/advisor-conseillere/index-eng.php
- **Rethink Poverty: Change Minds, Change Lives** (September 2011)
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit Report - www.rethinkpoverty.ca
- **Be Out There Movement to Get Kids Outside**
National Wildlife Federation - www.nwf.org/get-outside/be-out-there/why-be-out-there.aspx

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

(Organization/individual name) is willing to work towards making accommodations (in line with the Accessible Customer Service Standards) so that everyone can participate.

(Organization/individual name) will make every effort to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in a safe and healthy environment.

(Organization/ individual name) advocates through a written policy for increased opportunities to join in.

(Organization/individual name) staff/volunteers have been screened through a full police record check.

(Organization/individual name) will communicate the opportunity for financial assistance either from direct sources or other available resources.

(Organization/individual name) will treat each participant with dignity, respect and discretion when dealing with sensitive financial issues.

(Organization/individual name) will ensure that all information regarding a participant's financial situation remains confidential.

Each year, (Organization/individual name) will use the access toolkit cost-recovery ratio calculation to determine the number of subsidized spaces or resources available.

(Organization/individual name) will promote the access policies through their marketing material and at registration times.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE BUDGET

EXPENSES	DETAILS	PROJECTED COST
League Fees	League Fees \$200 + \$2/child Mini Soccer \$19.75/child x 42 Youth soccer \$23.25/child x 36 Affiliation Fees	\$356.00 \$829.50 \$837.00 \$ 40.00
Insurance	Included in League fees	
Equipment	Uniforms \$22 x 78	\$1,716.00
Playing Expenses	Chalk 45 bags x \$5.95/bag + tax Lining of the Field (\$10/sm, \$13/med, \$15/lg)	\$ 302.56 \$ 450.00
Play off Cost	Trophies 78 children x \$6 Food	\$ 468.00 \$ 225.00
Home Games Referee Fees	U6 - \$10 x 6 games U8 - \$13 x 6 games U10 - \$15 x 6 games U12 and 14 - \$20 x 12 games	\$ 60.00 \$ 78.00 \$ 90.00 \$ 180.00
Other	Equipment Replacement	\$ 800.00
TOTAL GROSS EXPENDITURES		\$6,687.06

REVENUE

Registration Fees	78 children - \$85/each	\$6,630.00
Sponsorships	Trophy, Team, Shirt Sponsors	\$1,000.00
TOTAL REVENUE		\$7,630.00
Profit		\$ 942.94

The Cost of the individual participant:

Based on the above budget, you are now able to determine the cost-per-participant. Using the sample budget above, an U8 player's individual participant cost would be:

League Fees	\$24.82
Uniform	\$22.00
Playing costs	\$ 9.65
Playoff Costs	\$ 3.00
Trophy and Banquet Costs	\$ 6.00
Referee Fees	\$ 5.20
Total	\$70.67

Given that the registration fee is normally \$85, the amount could be reduced to \$70 in order for this participant to be in receipt of assistance.

Consideration should also be given to the fact that this sample budget shows the organization may be making a profit on the registration fees of the other participants.

FULL COST RECOVERY: Setting price for service (sport or program) so that revenue generated is sufficient to fund all costs related to the delivery of the activity.

	Sample Figures
Total organization budgeted expenses	\$100,000.00
Income – other (sponsorships, advertising)	\$ 25,000.00
Expenses needed to be recovered by registration	\$ 75,000.00
Registration fee per participant	\$ 125.00
 Registrants required to balance budget	 600

600 REGISTRANTS ARE REQUIRED TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

Example:

Last season's registration was 620 registrants, providing a surplus of funds from 20 registrants. If your organization would subsidize half of those spots (10) and save 50 per cent for unseen expenses, a total of 10 children in the community would be able to participate at a more affordable rate.

APPENDIX C: DEVELOPING A FEE SUBSIDY POLICY

Below are some factors to consider when developing an application process and form. Organizations should determine what choices work best with their available resources, organization structure and registration process.

- Ability level
- Endorsement: Letter of official documentation could be used to verify eligibility.
- Family circumstances such as family income, outside family expenses and disposable income.
- Third-party referrals from a community professional, such as: social/community workers, doctors, principals/teachers, police officers, and government caseworkers, etc.
- Notice of Assessment
- Canada Child Tax benefit
- HST Tax credit
- Proof of address
- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disabilities Support Program benefit
- Guaranteed Income Supplement
- CPP Disability Pension Statement
- Financial assistance is limited to a maximum amount of \$_____ per session/per season.
- Financial assistance is available to a maximum amount of \$_____ per family/per individual.
- There is no limit to financial assistance. Each request is treated on an individual basis, with consideration given to annual family income, outside family expenses, disposable income and true costs for the participant.
- Passes for programs are not redeemable for cash
- Financial assistance is available for up to _____per cent of the registration fee
- The access policy administrator in an organization may waive the outlined criteria or limitations at their discretion.
- Per family maximum
- Per season maximum
- Number of lessons maximum
- Number of times supported (equipment needs)

Request for subsidy will be received at the time of registration, or two weeks prior to registration.

No appointment is necessary.

Applications can be completed online, by phone, or through the organization's registrar.

All requests for subsidy will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be treated with confidentiality.

The registrar, the president or the designated Access-Friendly administrator will administer the program.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE ACCESS POLICIES

Blades Skating Club Access Friendly Organization Policy



Adopted: May 13, 2009
Reviewed: May 27, 2011

Policy Statement:

Blades Skating Club is committed to the right of all children to participate in sport. Blades Skating Club is committed to treating all participants with dignity and respect. As part of these commitments, the club will provide resources each year toward the goal of making programs affordable and accessible.

Procedures:

1. The viability of the Blades Skating Club is of paramount importance. No measures toward the goal of accessibility will at any time put the club in financial jeopardy.
2. Each year, goals for the affordability measures to be offered in the coming skating year will be set at the year-end meeting. The financial position of the club will be taken into account prior to setting annual goals.
3. The financial statement will be prepared by the treasurer and presented at the June wrap-up meeting. This statement will reflect the current financial situation of the club and will be used to set annual goals.
4. Depending on available funds, goals will be set based on enrollment numbers. For example, with a year-end balance of \$500 dollars or more, enrollment of 20 skaters, would allow a 75 per cent subsidy of one skater; enrollment of 40 skaters would allow a 75 per cent subsidy of two skaters.
5. Determination of need will be left to the discretion of the Board President, and all records of conversation, application and subsidy will be kept in confidence with the president and treasurer.
6. As the opportunity arises, further initiatives to subsidize registration costs will be taken. For example, should Skate Canada grant the Blades Skating Club the opportunity to host a tournament, consideration of a \$400 subsidy toward registration for their children could be considered for a volunteer tournament coordinator.
7. Flexible payment plans will be offered to all families as follows:
 - Full payment at start of season.
 - Four equal payments made by postdated cheques in January, March, May and July.
 - More payment plan options available on request and at the discretion of the Board President.
8. Further assistance with fees can be negotiated in exchange for working volunteer hours. Each year, the Board will determine volunteer hours required and provide the opportunity for families to reduce their fee payments by agreeing to work a set number of volunteer hours. This will be negotiated through, and at the discretion of, the Board President.