

ACCESSIBILITY MANIFESTO

The Toronto Fringe has made a commitment to establishing and prioritizing accessibility in all areas of our organization.

We are grateful to the Metcalf Foundation for supporting our organization-wide initiative with a three-year Creative Strategies Incubator grant, which we began in 2017. The grant is allowing us to invest meaningful resources into providing, increasing, and improving accessibility at our major events including the summer favourite, Toronto Fringe Festival, and our bespoke winter series, the Next Stage Theatre Festival. With one year completed, we have learned a lot and understand that we still have a lot to learn.

We decided to create an **Accessibility Manifesto** so that people can discover what we have done, what we are doing, and what we are planning.

The Accessibility Manifesto serves as a roadmap for us and a commitment to you that we want to be held accountable. This document will aid us in being transparent about where we are at in the process and allow you to give us feedback, if you wish. It won't show every detail but will outline the main aspects of our plans. It is a working document that will be updated.

We appreciate your patience as we do this work and strive to be accessible in every sense of the word, as per our mandate.

This includes but is not limited to;

Our Staff
Our Artists
Our Patrons
Our Volunteers
Our Donors
Our Sponsors
Our Partners
Our Venues
Our Spaces
Our Attitude

What we have done:

- Created the new position of Access Coordinator for our organization, hired an Access Coordinator, and engaged an Access Consultant, forging the fundamental structure of this department
- Created a short-term and long-term work plan (for the next 2 years and beyond)
- Created a comprehensive accessibility handbook for our festival participants

- Created a program to educate and encourage participants to offer assisted measures (ASL Interpretation, Audio Description, Relaxed performances) at their shows
- Supported artists who opted-in to providing assisted measures for some or all of their performances at the 2017 Fringe Festival
- Mandated that all site-specific venues be physically accessible
- Included more information about accessibility on our website and in our program guide
- Began to overhaul training practices for the departments that engage with patrons and contribute to their Festival experience, including Front of House Managers, Volunteers, and Box Office Reps
- Met with consultants from various sectors to discuss ideas and best practices

What we are doing:

- Working with several consultants to complete a thorough audit of our main venues to assess and address barriers to access. Currently, the Toronto Fringe uses 14 Main venues for our summer festival and one venue, the Factory Theatre, for our winter festival, Next Stage.
- Using the data gathered in the venue audits to provide more accurate information on our website and to create visual venue guides available for any person to refer to
- Meeting with consultants – we discuss learnings, things that worked, and things that definitely need to improve
- Implementing updates to our website to make it more navigable and to offer more access-related content
- Working with Deaf Spectrum to create ASL videos with key information about attending and participating in our festivals as artists, patrons, and volunteers
- Continuing to establish relationships with service providers and community consultants who can be sought out and engaged by Fringe Festival participants
- Supporting artists providing assisted measures for their performances at Next Stage

What we are planning on next:

- Creating more opportunities for people with disabilities, Deaf and mad individuals to get involved with our organization in all capacities
- Discovering ways to make the Fringe Patio, Postscript, more physically accessible, more welcoming to the Deaf community, and more appealing to folks with neurodiversity and diverse abilities
- Working with like-minded organizations to improve the distribution of information about accessible performances and opportunities for artists who are Deaf, mad, and those with disabilities throughout Ontario
- Overhauling the box office experience to significantly improve the accessibility measures we offer our ticket-buying patrons
- Our current strategic plan includes a target to relocate our operations and office to a new, physically accessible workspace