

Model Prototype Template

Name of Model Prototype:

Accessibility Certification Model

Name of Model Prototype Leader (or Consortium Partners):

AccessAbility Advantage (A+)

AccessAbility Advantage, a joint venture between March of Dimes Canada and Quadrangle Architects Limited.

March of Dimes Canada

March of Dimes Canada (MODC) has been a service provider and advocate for people with disabilities for over 60 years. Its vision is to create a society inclusive of people with disabilities and to maximize their independence, personal empowerment and community participation. For more than half a century MODC has been expanding its range of services across Ontario, and more recently in other provinces, and now assists over 40,000 children and adults with a broad range of physical and other disabilities - making it one of Canada's largest rehabilitation organizations serving people with disabilities of all ages. Through the March of Dimes, AccessAbility Advantage is in contact with a wide range of professionals and consumer advocates.

Quadrangle Architects Limited

Established in 1986, Quadrangle Architects Limited is among Canada's most dynamic architectural firms. Its portfolio of projects and diversified client list includes major players in the assisted living, residential, commercial, media, hospitality, and retail industries.

Equally wide-ranging is Quadrangle's scope and expertise in the rehabilitation and conversion of existing buildings, historical restorations and renovations, corporate interiors and institutional projects. The team has extensive experience designing and managing construction projects across Canada and the United States for national and international retailers.

Objectives and Outcomes of the Model Prototype:

Objectives:

1. Establish an accreditation model that is based on a recognized set of standards. This would include any legislated accessibility requirements such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, best practices, research, evidence based design, community and user feedback. This set of standards will provide a strong foundation for businesses and organizations to excel in creating inclusive environments, communication and practices.

2. Address and assess accessibility and inclusion across multiple areas that affect the daily lives of people with disabilities such as:
 - a. Information and Communication;
 - b. Employment;
 - c. Transportation;
 - d. Public Spaces/Built Environment; and
 - e. Customer Service.
3. Provide a trusted standard by which clients and organizations can recognize achievement in the areas of accessibility and inclusion.

Outcomes:

1. The outcomes/goal of the model is to:
 - a. Enhance user experience for all persons as they engage with the areas identified in items noted above (2a-e);
 - b. Implement best practices in all the areas noted above;
 - c. Create a more inclusive environment for all;
 - d. Increase awareness about inclusive and accessible design and features;
 - e. Reduce attitudinal barriers and promote the value of accessibility;
 - f. Support organizations, businesses, designers, and the general public to enhance accessibility and inclusive environments;
 - g. Recognize leaders in creating inclusive and accessible environments and experiences;
 - h. Create a credible, recognized and respected accessibility certification program.

Executive Summary of the Model Prototype:

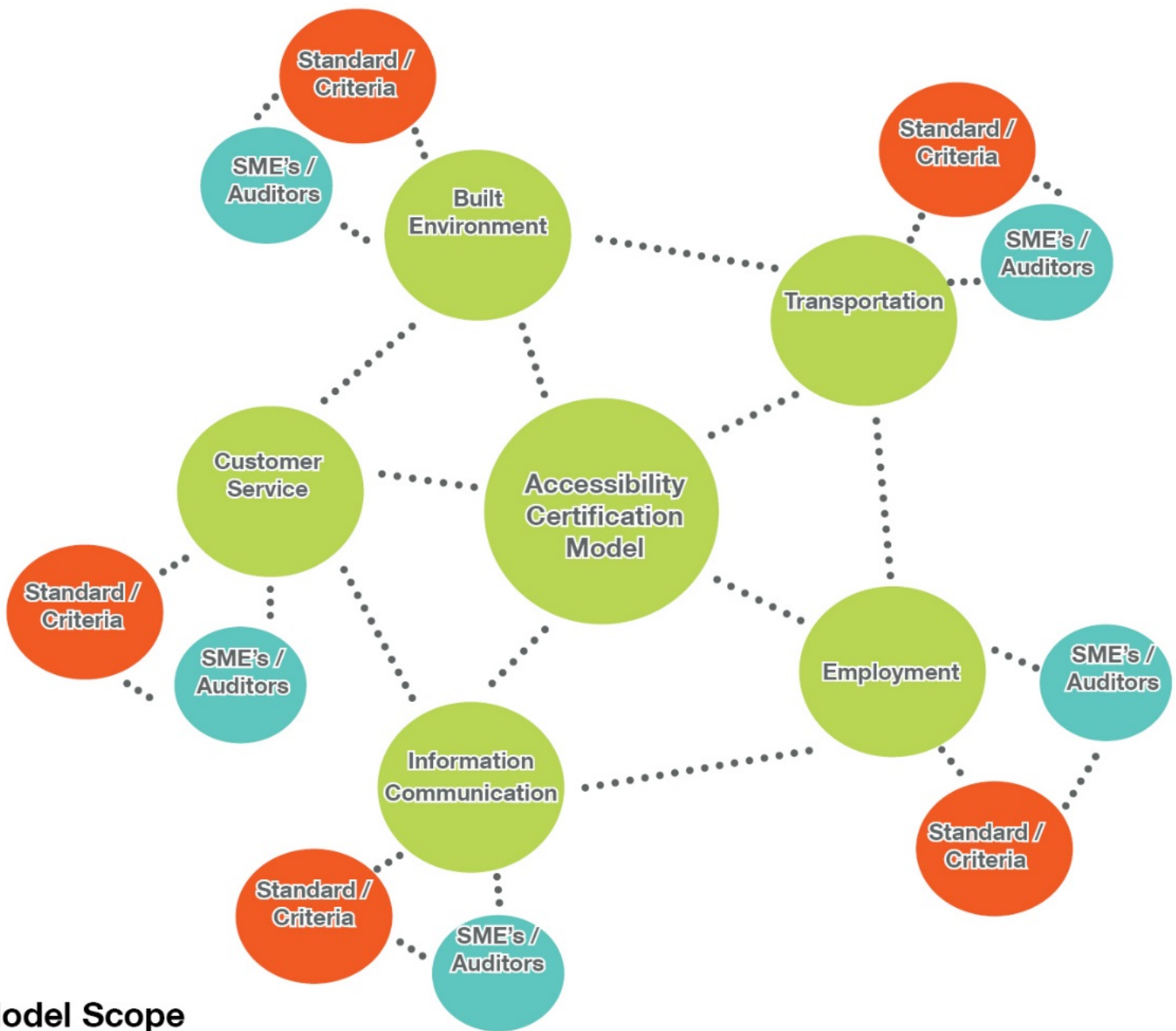
The Accessibility Certification Model is designed to be a comprehensive and inclusive accreditation system which builds upon the scope and legal framework of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The intent is to support businesses and organizations in creating an accessible and inclusive province and to recognize organizations which excel beyond AODA compliance.

In order to support the Accessibility Certification Model a series of complimentary programs, such as Membership, Education, and Sponsorship must also be developed within a larger program.

Leadership & Governance Framework

Leadership of the Accessibility Certification Model will be undertaken by an established, independent not-for-profit organization with a strong existing internal leadership and governance framework. A Board of Directors representing private and not-for-profit stakeholder agencies will provide subject matter expertise in the areas represented in the Model Scope and Structure, below. Working groups made of Subject Matter Experts (SME's) and accredited auditors will be established to assess success metrics, while the Board of Directors and working groups will spearhead the Membership, Education, and Sponsorship revenue streams.

Model Scope and Structure



Model Scope

*SME's = Subject Matter Experts

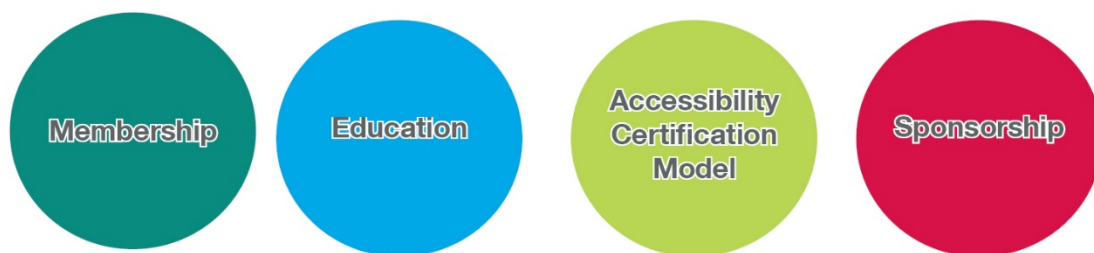
The Accessibility Certification Model measures the level of accessibility and inclusivity within an organization or business. The five areas that are evaluated include: Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; Public Spaces/Built Environment; and Customer Service. Each of these

areas would have a set of criteria that is developed from legislated accessibility requirements, best practices, research, evidence based design, community and user feedback.

Within a larger program that supports the Accessibility Certification Model, a selected group of SME's and accredited auditors must be established to work with organizations and businesses that wish to be leaders in creating accessible and inclusive environments by registering for assessment and recognition through the Accessibility Certification Model.

Tiered or graduated levels of certification indicate the level of "accessibility and inclusivity" achieved within the organization. Levels of accessibility and inclusivity are categorized on a range of achievement. Accessibility assessments would be quantified through metric or 'score card' to establish how well an organization met and/or exceeded the criteria within the Accessibility Certification Model. Organizations that receive a Platinum designation through the Model would offer the most inclusivity and accessibility, while a silver designation may be an organization or business that offered a considerable amount of accessible elements and features. Further exploration is required to further understand how all the five areas are assessed and criteria are weighted on the 'score card'.

Proposed Revenue Streams



Proposed Revenue Streams

To ensure that the Accessibility Certification Model is available to any businesses or organizations that wish to be recognized as a leader in accessibility and partake in the program a tiered fee system is recommended. A range of revenue streams, such as Membership, Education and Sponsorship, gives the Accessibility Certification Model the flexibility to adjust fees for services that is in proportion to the size and capacity of the business or organization.

Membership and Education

Through paid membership into the Accessibility Certification Model 'program', members would have access to various organized events for networking with leaders in Accessibility to educational opportunities with SME's in the field.

Sponsorship

Seeking sponsorship from industry partners, manufacturers, developers, corporate leaders in accessibility, and/or grant funding are a few ways to generate funding to support the program.

Considerations for Branding and Marketing

Any branding and marketing must:

- Leverage marketing and awareness of the AODA;
- Integrate simple and intuitive icons/pictograms;
- Include alternative formats for all the information.

Fit with Working Group Recommendations: Prioritized Guiding Principles (if applicable):

The Accessibility Certification Model considers and integrates all guiding principles.

Principles Not in Alignment with the Prototype (if applicable):

The Accessibility Certification Model does not contradict any principles.

Benefits and Costs to Organizations: Benefits to business:

The Accessibility Certification model will benefit businesses by providing:

- A structured approach to assessment;
- A recognized standard by which clients and stakeholders can identify the business' achievements in accessibility and inclusion;
- Acknowledgement for going beyond AODA compliance;
- A roadmap for identifying gaps and establishing goals;
- A supportive framework for mentorship, learning, and promotion of excellence;
- Participation in a larger culture of inclusion.

Piloting strategy: Overview:

The pilot phase will have the following stages:

- Standard and Criteria Development: Subject matter experts will develop assessment criteria and a ratings system for each of their areas of expertise.
- Assessment and Evaluation: Criteria will be tested within the governance group for relevance, accuracy and ease of use.

- Early adoption: A cross section of large and small businesses from across sectors will be invited to participate at no cost.
- Feedback and redevelopment: Criteria and processes will be updated to reflect the lessons learned in the self-assessment and early adoption stages.
- The pilot phase is anticipated to take at least 18 months.

Area of Focus:

Priority will be given to developing a metric or 'score card' that is relevant and accurate for both small and large private and not-for-profit organizations.

Scope:

The Accessibility Certification Model will provide assessment across the key areas for inclusion recognized in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act legislation: customer service, employment, transportation, information and communication, and the built environment including the design of public spaces.

Businesses will be selected across Ontario.

Rationale:

Piloting the criteria and rating system with the Governance group before inviting interested early adopters will allow two levels of quality assurance assessment of the criteria and ratings system. Successful engagement of early adopter businesses will create a framework for recognition of the program in future marketing and branding initiatives.

Five Year Vision:

In five years the Accessibility Certification Model will provide a recognized ratings system by which individuals and organizations can assess and promote excellence and achievement in the areas of accessibility and inclusion.