

To: Skagit County Commissioner

From: Skagit County Auditor Office

Subject: Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Formation

Overview

The Office of the Secretary of State and the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) announced a new resource to support people living with disabilities through the Accessible Communities Act (Chapter 215, Laws of 2010). The Act encourages counties to establish an Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) to promote greater awareness and accessibility and offers support for effective solutions and partnerships to engage the disability community, local government, business and organizations. (See attached letter from Secretary of State.)

The purpose of this memo is to seek Commission's Letter of Assurance, required to establish an Accessible Community Advisory Committee. (See attached sample Letter of Assurance.)

Background

"The daily experience of living with a disability is an exercise in problem solving. It requires planning every activity and goal to identify the barriers and come up with solutions. Living with a disability requires constant prioritization in use of energy, time and money. Many areas of public policy disproportionately affect people with disabilities. Policies made without input from people with disabilities can have serious unintended consequences." - Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment

The Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) Act (see attached RCW 36.01.310 and enacting regulations), provides resources for counties to promote better disability awareness and access for people who have disabilities and are eligible for:

- Reimbursement for travel, per diem, sign language interpreters and other accommodations during meetings
- A grant program to fund small, local projects to improve awareness, acceptance, inclusion and access for people with disabilities (see attached approved programs)
- A website to share best practices and other information
- A searchable database of accessible features for local businesses and other public accommodations

The Accessible Communities Advisory Committee ensures views and needs of people with disabilities are heard and considered in policy decisions.

Proposal

Establish Skagit County ACAC consisting of sub-committees representing each Skagit County community, beginning with a pilot program for the City of Anacortes.

ACAC sub-committees will consist of **core members**, fulfilling assigned needs representing various types of disabilities, advocates for disabled community and professionals serving this community. Sub-committee **Consultants** will provide subject matter expertise in areas of need, and will be called upon to provide input on issues as needs arise. **Stakeholders**, individuals interested in following sub-committee activities will be identified and included on sub-committee correspondence, are welcome to attend meetings and contribute to discussions (as is the general public).

Sub-committee members will identify, prioritize, develop and implement action plans to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities; by lowering or removing barriers hindering a person's ability to participate within the community; including (but not limited to) physical barriers, employment, housing, education, etc.

ACAC Projects and Activities:

1. Anacortes Community Theater: improve accessibility for people with disabilities to participate in productions, on stage.
 - a. Initiate ACAC grant request process
2. Automatic Doors at City Hall
3. Webpage(s) serving disabled community
 - a. Community resources
 - b. Searchable database of accessible venues
4. Provide input on sidewalk & curb-cut initiative
5. Educate local businesses:
 - a. Accessibility issues for residents & visitors
 - b. Employment opportunities for people with disabilities
6. Advocate for people with disabilities
 - a. Accessibility
 - b. Employment
 - c. Housing
 - d. Emergency planning

[Hawk Beacon
signals on S.
Commercial Ave]

Pedestrian safety
enhancements on
South Commercial
Ave

An ACAC Steering Committee, consisting of County and City leadership, will oversee and coordinate sub-committee priorities, allocate resources, monitor progress and oversee GCDE grant requests.

Implementation

1. Obtain County Commission's approval to form Accessible Communities Advisory Committee and submit Letter of Assurance to State.
2. Establish sub-committee Pilot Program in Anacortes to identify local barriers and develop solutions to reduce or eliminate them. (see attached draft ACAC Accessibility Committee Charter)
 - a. Review ACAC proposal with City of Anacortes leadership and obtain approval.
 - b. Recruit core committee members and consultants; meet w/ stakeholders.

Timing

April 2018

- Develop plan for Skagit County Accessibility Communities Advisory Committee
- Review plan and obtain approval from County Leadership to create Skagit County ACAC
- Establish Accessibility Sub-committee Pilot Program for Anacortes
 - Review w/ COA Leadership
- Send Letter of Assurance to Secretary of State

May 2018

- ACAC Kickoff meeting May XX
 - Announce ACAC to community
- Launch ACAC sub-committee Pilot Program for Anacortes
 - Initiate grant request for Anacortes Community Theater to improve accessibility for people with disabilities to participate in productions, on stage.

Attachments

1. Secretary of State letter
2. Sample Assurance Letter
3. RCW 36.01.310 and enacting regulations
4. Approved GCDE programs
5. ACAC Sub-committee Charter



2017

The Honorable County Auditor

Dear County Auditor:

The Office of the Secretary of State and the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) are pleased to inform you about a new resource to support people living with disabilities in your county. Through the Accessible Communities Act (Chapter 215, Laws of 2010), your county can promote greater awareness and accessibility. The Act offers support for effective solutions and partnerships to engage the disability community, local government, business and organizations.

The Act aims to encourage counties to establish an Accessible Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) and provides several options for counties to implement an ACAC. One of the options of **the Act allows a Disability Advisory Committee to expand their scope and become an ACAC** if authorized by the County Auditor.

If a county Disability Advisory Committee becomes an ACAC, it is eligible for:

- Reimbursement for travel, per diem, sign language interpreters and other accommodations during meetings;
- A grant program to fund small, local projects to improve awareness, acceptance, inclusion and access for people with disabilities;
- Technical assistance and training provided by the GCDE;
- A website to share best practices and other information; and
- A searchable database of accessible features for local businesses and other public accommodations.

For more detailed information on the Accessible Communities Act, please contact Debbie Himes, Program Coordinator at the GCDE at (360) 902-9362 or at dhimes@esd.wa.gov.

We encourage you to consider the benefits this opportunity brings to your community.

Sincerely,

Kim Wyman
Secretary of State

Mandeep Kaundal
GCDE Chairperson

Enclosures

Sample Assurance Letter

Date

Debbie Himes
GCDE
PO Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507

Re: Letter of Assurance for the Accessible Communities Act

Dear Ms. Himes:

In accordance with the Accessible Communities Act (Chapter 215, Laws of 2010), the Skagit County Commission assures the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment that it has established an active cross-disability Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC).

It assures that the members of the ACAC include persons with a diverse range of disabilities who are knowledgeable in indentifying and eliminating attitudinal, programmatic, communication and physical barriers encountered by persons with disabilities. It further assures the committee is actively involved in the following activities:

- Advising policy makers on the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency plans.
- Advising the county and other local governments within the county on access to programs, services, and activities, new construction or renovation projects, sidewalks, other pedestrian routes of travel, and disability parking enforcement.
- Developing local initiatives and activities to promote greater awareness of disability issues, and acceptance, involvement and access for persons with disabilities within the community.

Included with this letter is a list of current ACAC members and their qualifications.

The undersigned certifies the above assurances have been met.

Sincerely,

Skagit County [**Commissioner**]

RCW 36.01.310**Accessible community advisory committees.**

(1) A county has the option to expand the scope of an advisory committee established and maintained under *RCW **29A.46.260** to that of an accessible community advisory committee, or to create an accessible community advisory committee.

(2) A county that has an active accessible community advisory committee may be reimbursed within available funds from the accessible communities account created in RCW **50.40.071** for travel, per diem, and reasonable accommodation expenses for the participation of that committee's members in committee meetings and sponsored activities.

(3) A county establishes that it has an active accessible community advisory committee by submitting biennial assurances to the governor's committee on disability issues and employment that:

(a) The decision to establish an accessible community advisory committee was made by the county legislative authority, or by agents or officers acting under that authority.

(b) If an accessible community advisory committee is established by expanding the advisory committee established and maintained under *RCW **29A.46.260**, the county auditor supports that expansion.

(c) Committee members include persons with a diverse range of disabilities who are knowledgeable in identifying and eliminating attitudinal, programmatic, communication, and physical barriers encountered by persons with disabilities.

(d) The committee is actively involved in the following activities: Advising on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency plans; advising the county and other local governments within the county on access to programs services and activities, new construction or renovation projects, sidewalks, other pedestrian routes of travel, and disability parking enforcement; and developing local initiatives and activities to promote greater awareness of disability issues, and acceptance, involvement, and access for persons with disabilities within the community.

(4) Counties may form joint accessible community advisory committees, as long as no more than one of the participating counties has a population greater than seventy thousand.

[**2010 c 215 § 4.**]

NOTES:

*Reviser's note: RCW **29A.46.260** was recodified as RCW **29A.04.223** pursuant to **2011 c 10 § 87.**

Findings—2010 c 215: See note following RCW **50.40.071.**

Enacting Regulations

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-50-010 Who qualifies to apply for the accessible communities grants and for reimbursement of travel, per diem and reasonable accommodation for county accessible community advisory committee meetings and committee sponsored activities? (RCW 50.40.073)

- (1) For purposes of RCW 50.40.073, a county establishes that it has an active accessible community advisory committee by submitting a letter of assurance to the governor's committee on disability issues and employment containing the following:
 - (a) Submittal by the county legislative authority or an agent or officer acting under that authority;
 - (b) For a voting access advisory committee expansion, signature of the county auditor, or proof of approval by the county auditor;
 - (c) Description of how the county will ensure that the membership of the committee includes individuals with a diverse range of disabilities, and who are knowledgeable in identifying and eliminating attitudinal, programmatic, communication, and physical barriers encountered by persons with disabilities;

- (d) Description of how the county will ensure that the committee is actively involved in the following activities: advising on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency plans; advising the county and other local governments within the county on access to programs, services, and activities, new construction or renovation projects, sidewalks, other pedestrian routes of travel, and disability parking enforcement; and developing local initiatives and activities to promote greater awareness of disability issues, and acceptance, and involvement, and access for persons with disabilities within the community; and
- (e) If the committee will serve more than one county, proof of approval by the authorities for each participating county and a recent population count for each participating county including the source of the data. Counties may form joint accessible community advisory committees, as long as no more than one of the participating counties has a population greater than seventy thousand.
- (2) The letter of assurance must be renewed at two year intervals.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-50-020 What are the criteria for an accessible community advisory committee to be reimbursed for travel, per diem and accommodation expenses for committee members?

- (1) For travel, per diem and accommodation expenses to be eligible for reimbursement from this fund, the accessible community advisory committee meeting or sponsored activity must be approved in advance by the governor's committee on disability issues and employment. A form will be available on the accessible communities website for this purpose, and will require an estimate of the projected travel, per diem and accommodation expenses for that advisory committee meeting or sponsored activity. Prior approval of an accessible community advisory committee meeting or sponsored activity as eligible for reimbursement of travel, per diem and accommodation expenses for the participation of committee members will be based on the following:
 - (a) Availability of funds;
 - (b) Active committee status;
 - (c) Elimination of the more significant travel, communication, or physical barriers to participation by people with disabilities in committee meetings or committee sponsored activities; and
 - (d) Support of opportunities for diverse participation on accessible community advisory committees.
- (2) Travel and per diem for preapproved meetings and activities will be reimbursed following receipt review and approval of completed travel vouchers. The reimbursement will be at the same rates as those adopted for state employees by the office of financial management.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-50-030 How does an accessible communities advisory committee apply for a grant under the accessible communities act?

- (1) To the extent money is available, the governor's committee on disability issues and employment will publish on the accessible communities website any grant opportunities and forms for applying for accessible community grants.
- (2) The grant opportunities will be based on emerging issues and opportunities within the state. All evaluation and selection criteria will be included in the opportunity notification. Grant proposals will be required to include a plan for tracking, reporting and evaluating outcomes.

Accessible Community Advisory Committees

- The Accessible Community Advisory Committee currently has a second contract with Spokane County to develop educational materials for their board members and the public; review previously reviewed locations for updates on accessibility improvement progress. During this grant period their "Accessibility Ambassadors" will visit a minimum of 100 additional locations. Spokane County will also develop orientation and educational tools and information for the ACAC Members. The total on this contract is \$43,369.
- Jefferson County applied for their second contract and was approved for funding to improve the disabled parking, route of travel and sidewalks at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Also included in the contract is adding automatic door openers on county buildings, purchasing assistive listening devices for county meetings, and purchase Project Life Saver, a tracking device to locate people who tend to wander and get lost. The total on this contract is \$47,791.01.
- Cowlitz County has a contract waiting for their signature, to begin December 1, 2017 to add automatic doors to several county offices in their courthouse built in 1923. An estimate of 33,000 people visit the courthouse each year. The total on this contract is \$62,903.39.
- The GCDE has worked for the past 18 months to get a contract with Wahkiakum County to remodel their 1938 community center's entry ways and bathrooms. The County will contribute \$40,000 to the project and GCDE \$115,000. But, because of the size of the county, there aren't many contractors to do the work. They have gone out to other counties (Cowlitz and Pacific) but no luck. This is a great project and the GCDE is very supportive in getting this done.

ACAC Sub-committee: Anacortes

Team Name:	Co-leaders
ACAC Sub-committee: Anacortes	Kirk Kennedy, Sylvia Cooper
Team Purpose:	
<p>Vision: Improve quality of life for residents and visitors of Anacortes with disabilities by lowering barriers limiting their participation in the community.</p> <p>Mission: Listen to needs of people with disabilities and educate them on current resources available to address, educate government and businesses on needs of people with disabilities and advocate for change where needs for people with disabilities are not being met.</p>	
Description:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members include persons with a diverse range of disabilities who are knowledgeable in identifying and eliminating attitudinal, programmatic, communication, and physical barriers encountered by persons with disabilities. • The committee will be actively involved in the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advising on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency plans; – Advising the county and other local governments within the county on access to programs services and activities, new construction or renovation projects, sidewalks, other pedestrian routes of travel, and disability parking enforcement; – Developing local initiatives and activities to promote greater awareness of disability issues, and acceptance, involvement, employment and access for persons with disabilities within the community. 	
Team Objectives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define local projects to improve awareness, acceptance, inclusion and access for people with disabilities; • Seek resources (funding, personnel, etc.) to enable project implementation through GCDE grants or other opportunities; • Develop website to share best practices and other information; and • Develop a searchable database of accessible features for local businesses and other public accommodations. • Develop successful committee template and introduce to other Skagit communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to needs of people with disabilities, [Provide a sounding board for people with disabilities] • Provide information regarding current resources for people with disabilities, • Address and educate government and businesses on needs of people with disabilities • Advocate for change where needs for people with disabilities are not being met. 	

ACAC Sub-committee: Anacortes

Team Deliverables:

- ACT Theater accessible stage
- Develop & maintain website for people with disabilities
- Define transportation issues for people with disabilities and explore opportunities
- Install automatic doors in City Hall
- Provide recommendations for curb cuts and sidewalk repairs
- Develop program to educate local businesses on needs of people with disabilities

Hawk Beacon
signals on S.
Commercial Ave

Committee Membership:

Core Members

Name:	Role:	E-Mail Address:
Eric Johnson Kirk Kennedy Sylvia Cooper Joann & Jerry Olmstead Carla Bray Colette & Andy Arvidson Ed Gegan	Champion Co-leader/mobility challenged Co-leader (COA) Hearing impaired Mobility Challenged Visually impaired Developmental Disability	

Consultants

Name:	Role:	E-Mail Address:
Steve Lang Joann Stewart Keiko McCracken Brad Windler Sally Hill Nancy Novak SANDY PERKINS	COA-Public Works COA-Building & Permit Dept. ASD 103 Skagit Transit Auth. Anacortes Senior Activity Ctr. Skagit County Public Health DD Program Coordinator	

Charter Approval:

Submitted by:

Champion: _____

Co-leaders: _____

Approved by:

Anacortes Mayor: _____

Skagit County Commissioners: _____