

RAMP Accessibility Audit FAQ

Working together to create accurate, up-to-date, easy-to-find access info on local spaces, and building vibrant, inclusive, accessible communities — outside the box.

What's an accessibility audit? Why are you doing this? Disability Justice focused accessibility auditing is about collectively creating useful, accurate, broad-based and up-to-date accessibility information about the physical environment so we can make informed choices about what events and spaces we participate in and support. The Radical Access Mapping Project began in 2009 out of frustration over the lack of useful (or often any) accessibility information in our communities. Auditing spaces is just one piece among many working towards disability justice, with an anti-oppression, intersectional, radical access approach: one that looks at & beyond ramps.

Since accessibility is not just about structural access for folks with specific kinds of limited mobility, in this audit you'll find a wide range of information which you may not find in a traditional accessibility audit. Audits will vary depending on the needs and perspectives of the communities and spaces in question. The RAMP is made up of a very small team of volunteers, and the invaluable input and direction of a wide range of folks with various access needs makes this a real collaborative effort. Your voice and experience are central!

A Brief Note On What An Audit Is Not This audit is *not* a value judgment about a venue or event, its organizers, owners or attendees; it's *not* a tool to blame or shame anyone. It's as comprehensive as possible, but there will always be pieces missed or not explored fully. It's *not* meant to take the place of other work to increase access, is *not* a stand-alone piece, and *cannot* take the place of a comprehensive audit of the *structural integrity* of a space. It's also *not* a legally binding document: you won't be fined for not having an audit done or for receiving a specific accessibility rating based on this audit. It's just **one more tool in the box**: an accurate, up to date, realistic reflection of the current situation in a space, and some ideas on moving forward.

What are you looking for when you do an audit? We look for anything that could get in the way of a wide variety of people accessing a space safely and comfortably, but not only the obvious structural barriers. Let's also notice if people can participate in all aspects of the space or only some (for example, is the DJ booth accessible? Are there strong scents in the space? Is ASL interpretation a regular occurrence at events? Is it a child-friendly space? Etc.), and if they can do so without being excluded in ways that aren't always tangible. We're also looking for things that are working well, positive steps a space or organizers have taken to increase access, some of which may be available only at certain events, etc. Each piece informs the other to create an overall picture of broad accessibility that impacts people differently depending on their combined needs.

As much info as possible is provided so people can make informed decisions rather than always relying on guesswork. Certainly every need can't be anticipated, but we're responsive to adding more information to the audit. This process is constantly being expanded, updated, refined. If you have specific needs which the current audit doesn't address, let's incorporate them into your audit and possibly future audits. For these audits to be effective and meaningful it's incredibly important to have input, direction and leadership from those who use the info. Think about your specific needs and let's go from there.

When should we get an audit? Generally we can work with your schedule, but require a few weeks notice to arrange audits. If you're hosting an event it's best to have the access info up sooner than later, as people need to plan ahead (especially important with conferences and such, as people need to register, plan travel and personal care assistants, variously accessible housing and so forth, and should still have access to the usual "early bird" costs of conferences). Please get in contact as soon as possible, and certainly **before you've decided on and paid for a venue**. People have asked for audits in spaces that aren't accessible in even the most basic ways. In those cases -if we agree to do an audit at all- we ask that you please provide a basic overview of the accessibility situation in the space (specifically: stair count, whether they're railed or not, if everything's on the same floor, and scents used in the space) so we can get someone who can access the space to assist or complete the onsite audit. Depending on the space we might be available to do roll/walk-throughs, then give you a general sense of accessibility of a space you are considering for an event.

So ... what's in it for me as an organizer or owner? Sharing space is one of the most effective ways of building a community culture not simply of inclusion, but liberation. As organizers, when you find, use and share info about accessible space, you're letting people know that you recognize them as part of your events, your communities. Using this audit is one way to get that info out there clearly, consistently, without using up more energy than you have available fishing around for pieces of info which often never come. For owners, people using your space likely span a wide variety of bodies, identities, energies, resources, more of which can be brought to your table through the use of an audit and by increasing access in the space. You end up with a product you can use over and over, easily refer to when specific questions come your way, and which brings more people in the door.

What's the cost? This should be as accessible as possible for everyone involved, so a reasonable sliding scale is in effect based on your ability to pay and our ability to cushion lower payments with higher ones. This is a not-for-profit endeavour, and only a small team does all of the work. The audit process takes a *minimum* of 5 hours from start to finish, depending on the size & complexity of the space, spread over a longer period of time as we're occasionally unable to do everything in one go. We want to ensure costs and labour are covered fairly for everyone involved, and are open to making alternative arrangements such as trades, payment plans, and occasionally donated audits. If you own the space or are a larger organization, the expectation is that you'll spend more for the service, as you get significant ongoing benefit from an audit over time, as will any group who uses your space, or have more funds to draw from. Contact us with the information requested below, and let's work out an arrangement that will get the info out there, fair payment for the work, without breaking your bank.

OK I'm interested. What can i expect? What happens next?

Step 1. contact via email and answer these questions as best you can:

- When do you need the audit by? Have a specific or approximate date in mind?
- What kind of space is it? Restaurant, theatre, bar, community centre, house, etc.?
- What's your relationship to the space? Owner, manager, customer, organizer, etc.?
- Do you know if changes to the space are possible? Is there a budget for changes?
- Are there ANY stairs into the main space or to bathrooms? Specify. Can they be ramped?
- Who & what is the audit for? An event like a book launch, party, fundraiser, etc? Is it for the use of the venue itself or a community group, non-profit, for-profit, business, etc.?
- Anything else? E.g. Is it an exclusive (i.e. "____-only") event/venue? Strong scents, etc.?
- Is the sliding scale workable for you?
- Would you or others in your group like to help conduct the audit?

We'll get back to you as soon as possible. Depending on the specifics, we may not be able to perform an audit because of the space, deadline, or scheduling. Keep in mind that even if we're unable to do it now, we may be able to in the future, or if you can provide volunteers.

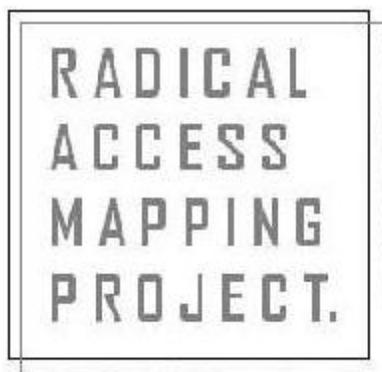
Step 2. Visit the space if possible. If it seems we can complete an audit for the space based on your answers to the previous questions, we'll make arrangements for payment at this point, tailor an audit to the space and your needs, then come back at a later date to perform the full audit. If arranging a preview of the space isn't possible, you can also email photos or floor plans of the space to give a better idea of the space (a good idea anyways which will add to the audit).

Step 3. Schedule an audit date and time.

Step 4. An auditor will meet you with clipboard & measuring tape, then move through all agreed areas of the space taking measurements, notes, and photos (if appropriate/ allowed), and ask some questions (can also do that via email). Aside from letting us in and sharing any important details about the space, we won't generally require assistance through the process, which will take anywhere from **one hour up** depending on the size, complexity and ease of moving through the space. It's preferable to come in, get down to the business of performing the audit, and chat later.

Step 5. Putting your audit package together. This includes possibly contacting you to clarify some things about the space. Because of the minimal people-power involved the time frame for getting your package will vary depending on what other audits are underway, but you should generally expect to receive it within 30 days.

What happens to the audit once it's completed? When the work is done, you'll receive both an electronic and hard copy (binder) of a package containing: PDFs, Google Docs, or other specified formats of all the information gathered from the over 400-point audit (tabbed for ease of finding specifics), an overview for those who just want a general sense of the space's accessibility, accessibility ratings for the space, text to use for online posting of the audit, suggestions for upgrading your specific space or event; if you've requested information on ramp building or other helpful tools, that will be included as well; and any other odds and ends like this info sheet, pamphlet, feedback form and so on. If you'd like alternative formats like large print, Braille, languages other than English, etc., those can be included at cost of printing and/or translation. We can meet to discuss the package and answer any questions, and the audit can then be used for any future events in the space. If you have been given templates, we ask that you include all contact info as it appears on the template. Please use the linking text included in the package for online advertisement, so people can ask direct questions, give feedback, and learn about more audits. Please do email RAMP if you make changes to the space so updates can be made to the online files.



If this sounds like something that would benefit you & your communities, let's chat about your specific needs.

email: rampvancouver@gmail.com

**web: <http://radicalaccessmapping.org>
(under construction)**