TRAIL ACCESSIBILITY

AN INTRODUCTION

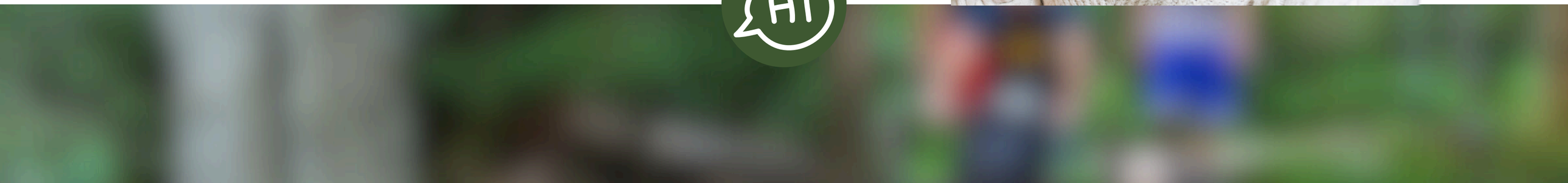
ACCESSIBUILD
ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTATION SERVICE

HIKE
NOVA SCOTIA

Introduction

Who Am I?

- Parent and partner
- Involved community member
- Healthcare worker
- Accessibility professional
- Person without a disability



Goals of this Webinar

1. Review standards
2. Review technical accessibility for trails (RHFAC & CSA B651-23)
3. Accessible trails vs accessible features
4. Case Study 1 - Moon Mist
5. Assessment toolkit

Standards

Nova Scotia Building Code	CSA B651	Rick Hansen Foundation
Purpose: Provincial legal requirements for construction, including **minimum** accessibility standards.	**Purpose:** National technical standard for accessible design, addressing physical and sensory barriers.	**Purpose:** Voluntary certification program assessing meaningful access beyond code compliance.
Scope: Mandatory for all construction projects in Nova Scotia; references CSA B651 for guidance.	**Scope:** Provides detailed design specifications (e.g., tactile indicators, door widths, luminance contrast).	**Scope:** Evaluates 12 categories (e.g., interior circulation, emergency systems, technology) using CSA B651 and **user experience**.
Compliance: Legally enforceable; failure to comply can result in penalties.	**Compliance:** Voluntary adoption but often referenced in building codes and legislation.	**Compliance:** Voluntary certification; buildings can earn ratings (e.g., Gold, Certified) based on 100-point score.
Focus: General construction standards, including fire safety, energy efficiency, and accessibility.	**Focus:** Technical accessibility requirements for universal design.	**Focus:** Holistic user experience for people with mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive disabilities.

Standards Summary

Nova Scotia Building Code: Legal minimums.

CSA B651: Technical blueprint for accessibility.

RHFAC: Voluntary excellence benchmark, using CSA B651 and lived experience to promote inclusive design.

Built Environment Accessibility Standard

Overview

- The Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations are now law. Enforcement of compliance starts **1 April 2026**.
- “recreational trail” means a trail that is intended for public use and to be used for recreational and leisure purposes and that is managed or operated by the Government, a prescribed public sector body, **a registered not-for-profit organization that develops trails or an incorporated trail group**;

Built Environment Accessibility Standard

Overview Continued

- Development of plan for accessible outdoor spaces 26 (1) **The Government** must develop a multi-year plan that addresses the accessibility of recreational trails, parks, beach access routes and outdoor play spaces in Nova Scotia and requires that all of the following be located in each geographic region specified by the plan by 2030:
    - (a) **1 accessible recreational trail;**

RHFAC Accessibility

Rick Hansen Foundation
Accessibility Certification™

1. **Designated Trailheads**
2. **Trail/pathway entrances**
3. **Clear width and passing spaces**
4. **Surface resistance**
5. **Path slope**
6. **Obstacles and overhead**
7. **Edge protection**
8. **Pedestrian crossings**
9. **Seating**
10. **Drainage**
11. **Illumination**
12. **Ramps**
13. **Stairs**
14. **Wayfinding & Signage**

10.1.1 Designated Trailheads

- Integrates designated trailhead as part of the trail design at key entrance and exit points along the trail, intermediate areas on lengthy trails, and decision points.

10.1.2 Entrances

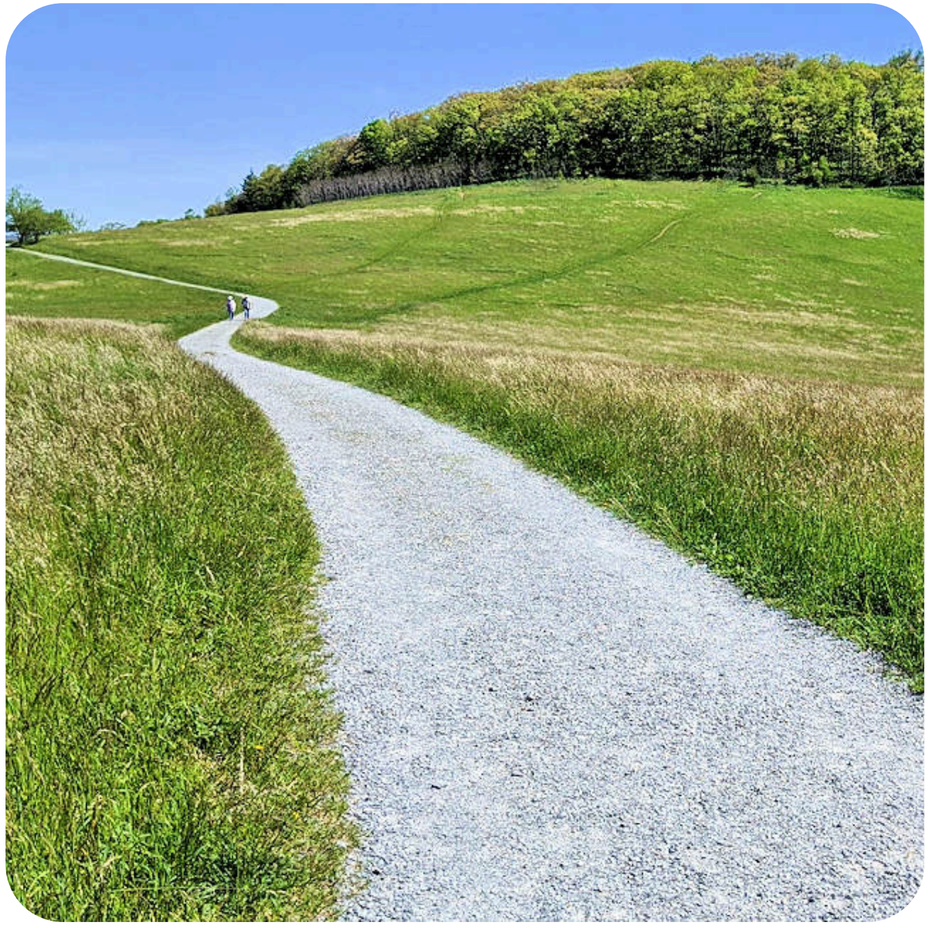
- Clear width, free from obstacles, especially if bollards are used
  - 860mm width minimum
- Ensures any gates are simple and easy to open, with no level change or ramp

10.1.3 Width & Passing

- Provides sufficient clear width
- Allows one or two-way flow of people, depending on the expected number of people

10.1.4 Stable Surface

- Has a stable and firm surface that resists movement
- Has appropriate type of surface material
  - Suitable exterior surface materials (asphalt, concrete, stone, timber, brick/paving)
  - Avoids using loose materials, such as sand, gravel, or woodchips, rough/irregular materials such as cobble stones)
- Minimal gaps, joints, or breaks in the surface, which prevent tripping hazards
  - Any gaps should run perpendicular to the direction of movement

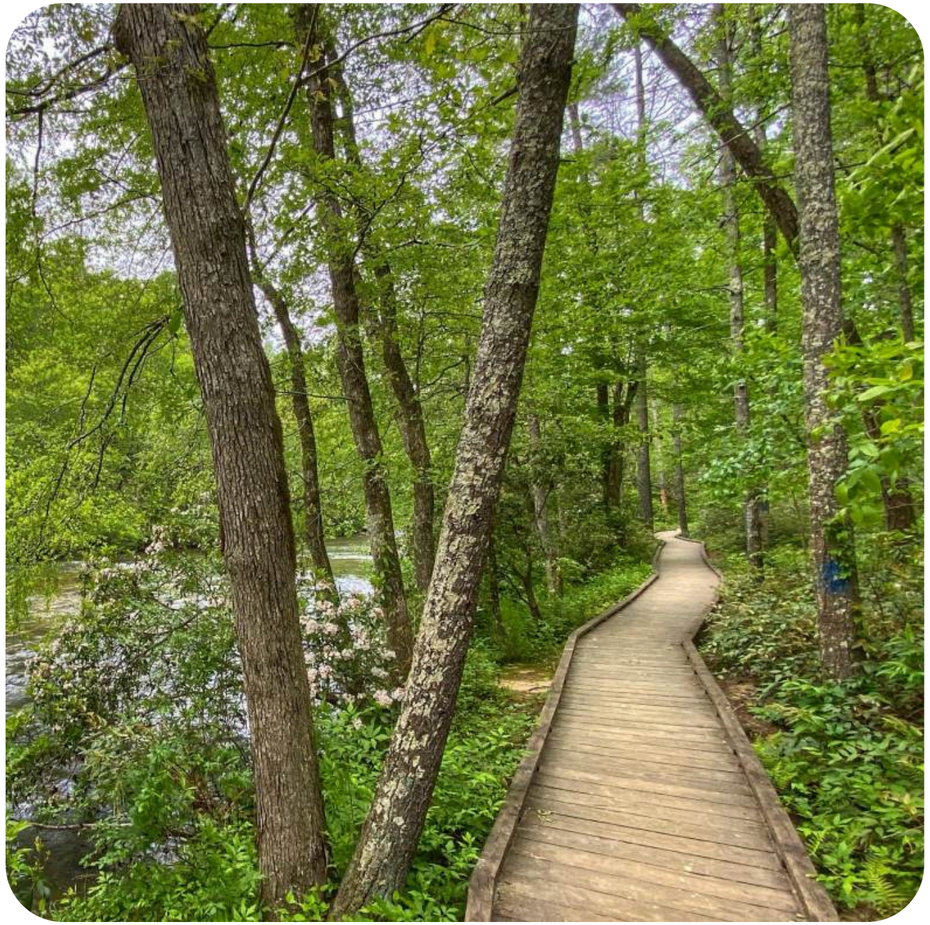


10.1.5 Level Path

- Ensures running slope of less than 5% (1:20)
- Handrails if sloped pathways have a running slope over 5%, where ramp cannot be installed due to topography of the trail
- Ensures cross slope is 2% maximum
- Ensures gradient is constant and consistent

10.1.6 Path & Overhead Obstacles

- Provides suitable overhead clearance
- Ensures protruding objects in the path of travel are cane-detectable
- Base of trees is protected by a tree grate or cane-detectable tree guard
- Ensures any fixed items are located off the path of travel



10.1.7 Edge Protection

- Has clearly defined pathway edges
- Suitable edge protection, such as curb, barriers or guardrails, on either side of a path, or adjacent to a vehicle or shared use route
- Uses guardrails or barriers where there is a significant level change
- Ensures guardrails or barriers are designed to allow people using wheelchairs and children, to see and be seen through railings

10.1.8 Pedestrian Crossings

- Provides logical and understandable directional signage at crossings
- Ensures crosswalks are clearly marked, and located where they are clearly visible, safe, and convenient
- Ensures crosswalks have additional alerts (flashing lights, audible signal, or embedded LED lighting)

10.1.9 Seating

- Provides seating off path of travel at rest areas, if long route and/or steep grade
- Seating is located on level, firm and stable surface.
- Contrasts visually with surroundings
- Incorporates clear space for people using wheelchairs, scooters, or strollers so they can sit alongside one another
- Offers a variety of seating options (seats with and without armrests)

10.1.10 Drainage

- Does not permit water accumulation or pooling
- Ensures drainage channels do not obstruct path of travel
- Has drainage grates offset from main pathway
- Ensures opening for drainage gates are perpendicular to the path of travel

10.1.11 Well-Illuminated

- Ensures the complete trail/pathway is brightly lit.
- Provides adequate lighting for the nature and use
- Provides even light distribution at ground level
- Has fixtures mounted below eye level used in addition to standard lighting to provide better definition of ground surfaces

10.2 Ramps

- Has a running slope of 8.3% (1:12) or less (as per building code and CSA B651), ideally 5% or less
- Provides sufficient clear width, free from obstructions, allows people to easily pass one another
- Surface is firm, stable and slip resistant
- Landings are located at the top and bottom of each run

10.2 Handrails

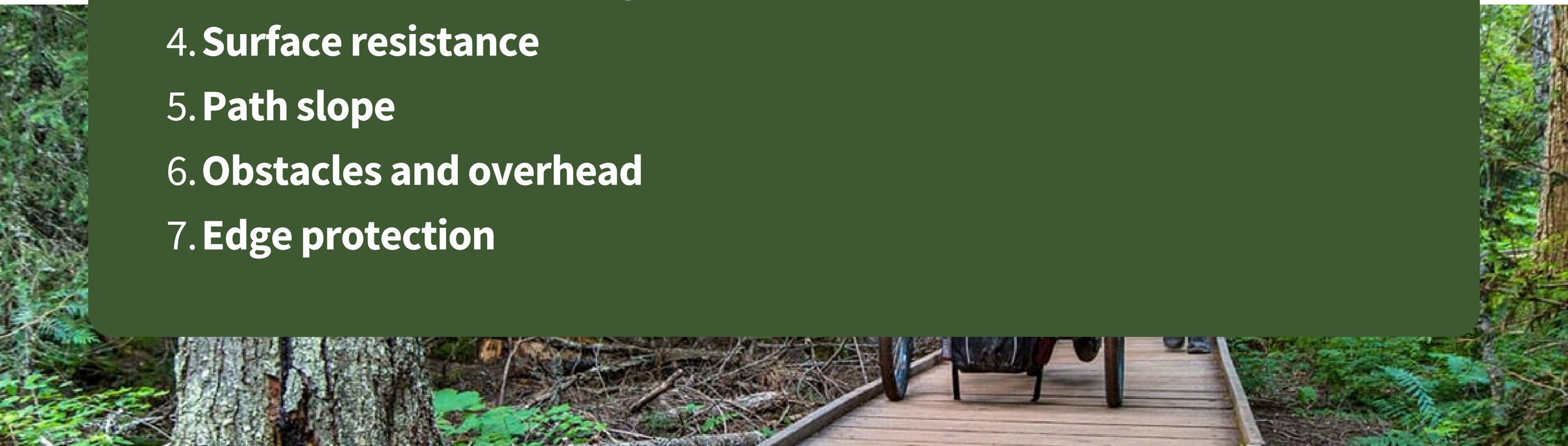
- Provides handrails on both sides of a ramp at a consistent, accessible height
  - People who are blind or have low vision rely on handrails to guide them in negotiating ramps, people with mobility rely on them for stability
- Is securely attached and supports enough weight for its intended use
- Is constructed of materials of low thermal conductivity that do not become too hot or cold to the touch (wood, plastic-coated steel, etc.)

10.2 Edge Protection

- Provides curbs or protective barriers on both sides of the ramps and on landings, where there is a drop-off, to prevent wheelchair casters or crutch tips from slipping off the edge

CSA B651

1. **Ground surfaces**
2. **Edge protection**
3. **Clear width and passing spaces**
4. **Surface resistance**
5. **Path slope**
6. **Obstacles and overhead**
7. **Edge protection**



Visual Features

1. Edge protection and navigation
2. Attention indicator for areas to proceed with caution (cliffs, water crossings, steep slopes)
3. Auditory or sensory
4. QR code for trail information
    a. Could have posts along the trail route with QR codes that describe scenery, trail progress, etc.

Cognitive Features

1. Decision making is most important.
    a. Is navigation clear and simple.
        i. For example, trail is a loop or an in-and-out.
        ii. Adequate signage with distance markers.
        iii. Navigational cues - “Entrance” and “Exit”

Case Study: Moon Mist All Ability Accessible Trail

- 550-meter looped path
- Even graded 5 feet wide pathway
- Trail kiosk
- Picnic areas and rest stops
- Wooden sides along the perimeter (sight & navigation)
- 3 accessible parking spaces
- Accessible port-a-potty near the start of the trail
- County of Annapolis worked with a volunteer group called Annapolis Basin Outdoor Adventures Society

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Fully-Accessible vs Accessible Features

1. Evaluate the level of difficulty of the trail and consider what is possible.
2. Fully-accessible includes all accessibility features
3. Accessible features are enhancements of trails that would not meet criteria to be fully-accessible

Trail Accessibility Checklist

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Trail		Date	

No	Access Priorities	✓
01	**Entrance** ▸ Direct, unobstructed access from the parking lot to the trail ▸ Clear signage identifying the trail entrance	
02	**Pathways & Ramps** ▸ Provide at least 1200 mm (minimum) width at locations with site constraints ▸ Include passing space of 1830 mm (minimum) wide by 1830 mm (minimum) long, at intervals of 50 m or less ▸ Running slope with the ratio between 1:12 (8.33%) and 1:20 (5%)	
03	**Trail Surfacing** ▸ Paved or finely crushed pea gravel/crusher dust ▸ Track their attendance and participation in training.	
04	**Edge Protection** ▸ Clearly defined edges ▸ Suitable protection at level changes, cliffs, etc	
05	**Seating** ▸ Offer seating or rest areas at regular intervals, off the main path of travel ▸ Ensure seating can be accessed - i.e., is not on a platform	
06	**Maintenance** ▸ Establish a maintenance plan and point of contact for feedback or concerns	
07	**Restroom** ▸ Restrooms are not always feasible for trails - if one is available, advertise its level of accessibility	

Assessment Toolkit

- Measuring tape
  - Parking spaces, if applicable
  - Width of pathways
  - Edges
  - Height of overhang
- Slope calculator
  - Measures slope of ramps, trails, etc
- Guidelines checklist
  - Entrance
  - Width
  - Slope

Local Supports

Disability-focused organizations:

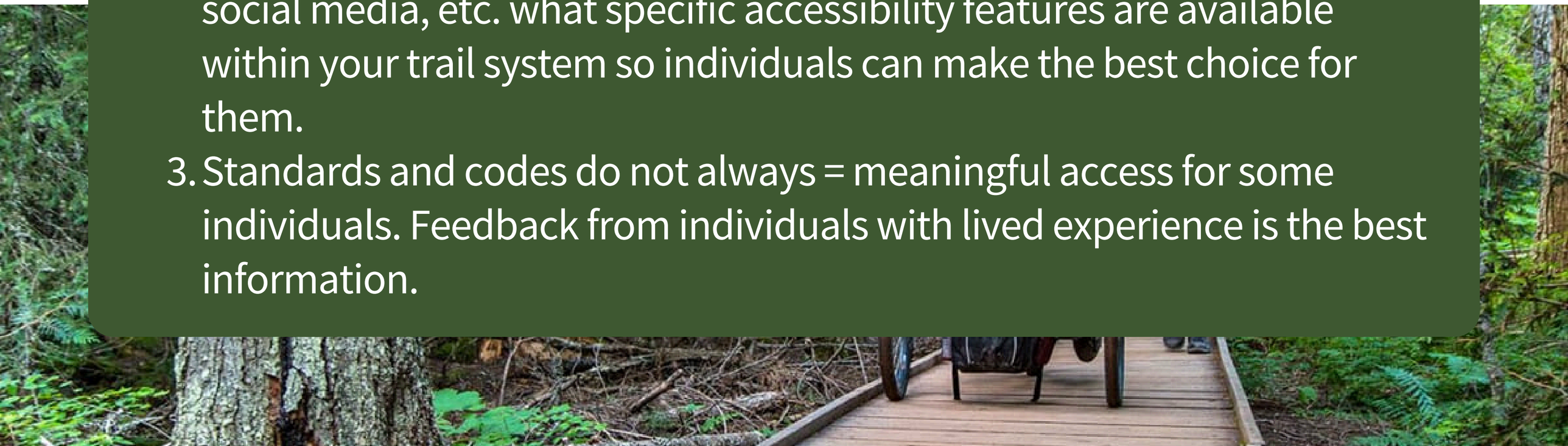
- Easter Seals
- ReachAbility
- Inclusion Nova Scotia
- L’Arche Halifax
- The Club Inclusion
- Rick Hansen Foundation

Now What?

1. Evaluate the level of difficulty of the trail and consider what is possible.
2. Start with the basics - entrance, wayfinding and signage, rest areas, maintenance of grounds, etc.
3. Make a plan and apply for funding.
4. Advertise accordingly.

Key Takeaways

1. Determine if your trail is suitable for a fully-accessible trail or enhancement of accessibility features.
2. Accessibility is not a one size fits all solution. Advertise on website, social media, etc. what specific accessibility features are available within your trail system so individuals can make the best choice for them.
3. Standards and codes do not always = meaningful access for some individuals. Feedback from individuals with lived experience is the best information.



Questions?

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THANKS

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