



Dementia-Inclusive Community Recreation Guide

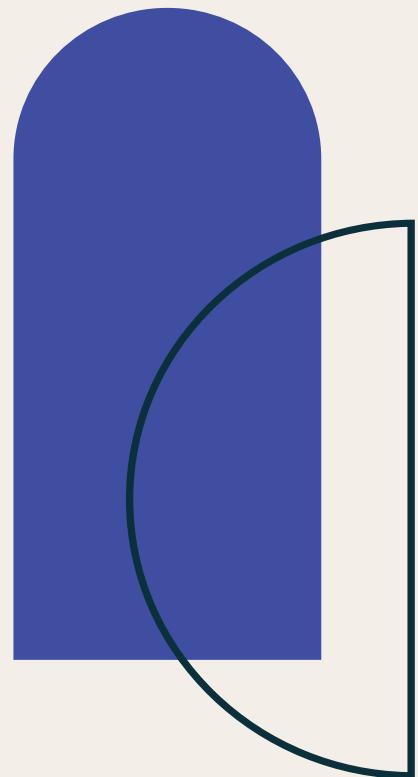
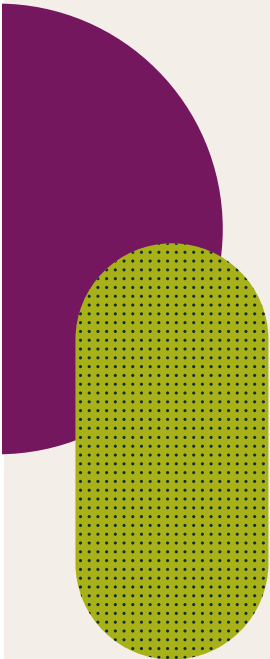
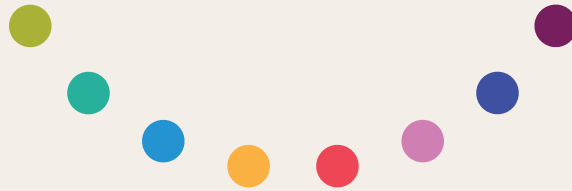




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Glossary of Terms

Age-friendly community – A community where the policies, services and physical spaces are universally designed to enable people of all ages to actively age in a secure and accessible environment from both a physical and social perspective.

Caregiver – A person who tends to the needs or concerns of a person with short- or long-term limitations due to illness, injury or disability.

Colour contrast – The difference in brightness between two or more colours. The difference in brightness can make images easier to see.

Dementia – Is a disorder of the brain resulting in a progressive loss of cognitive abilities affecting memory, language, orientation, judgment, problem-solving skills, and behaviour.

Dementia-friendly community – A community where people living with dementia are understood, respected, and supported.

Dementia-friendly design – Design principles based on the use of adapted patterns, contrasts, colour to make spaces easier to navigate for people living with dementia.

Person-centered approach – Ensures people's preferences, needs and values guide decisions, and care is respectful and responsive.

Physical environment – The external surroundings and conditions we live in which influence a person's health.

Recreation – The experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community well-being.

Recreation leaders – Individuals who conduct recreation activities with groups or individuals in public, private, or volunteer agencies or recreation facilities. They organize and promote activities such as arts and crafts, sports, games, music, dramatics, social recreation, and hobbies, considering the needs and interests of participants.

Social connection – The feeling that you belong to a group and generally feel close to other people.

Social isolation – When a person does not have relationships or contact with others and has little to no social support.

Stigma – Negative attitudes, beliefs or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life.

Wayfinding – Information that guides people through a physical environment and to navigate from place to place.

About this Document

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, approximately 60 per cent of people living with dementia live in their communities and, with support, can maintain a good quality of life. Creating age- and dementia-inclusive recreation opportunities is important to ensure older people and people living with dementia can remain active and engaged in their communities.

The Dementia-Inclusive Community Recreation Guide can assist users (including recreation staff, town council members, community volunteers, not-for-profit organizations, and health professionals) take action to develop and deliver dementia-inclusive recreation programming. The document aims to:

- Build awareness of dementia and the challenges people living with dementia may experience.
- Outline adaptations and changes that can make activities dementia-friendly.
- Promote effective and respectful communication.
- Create dementia-inclusive spaces that help people stay as independent as possible.



Dementia Facts and Figures



An estimated 10,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador are living with dementia



By 2050 dementia rates are expected to increase by 73 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Prevalence of dementia more than doubles every 5 years among seniors, from less than 1 per cent in seniors 65 to 69, to about 25 per cent among those 85 and older.



In Canada 1 in 4 seniors aged 85 and older have been diagnosed with dementia.



Most Canadians living with dementia live at home, and continue to be active members in their community.



Dementia is more prevalent among women than men.



44 per cent of caregivers are between the ages of 45 and 65.



45 per cent of dementia cases could be prevented or delayed by modifying risk factors.

What is Dementia?

Dementia is not a single disease, but the term used to describe symptoms affecting memory, thinking, or social skills that interfere with daily living. There are several known types of dementia, with the most common being Alzheimer's disease. Dementia is not a normal part of aging, but the risk of developing dementia increases with age.

It is possible to live well with dementia.

Dementia does not remove someone's ability to express, respond to, and experience feelings such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and love. Individuals can continue to enjoy their hobbies, friendships and relationships, and may be interested in learning something new. Everyone can play a role in supporting people to live well with dementia.

Everyone experiences dementia differently. A person living with dementia may:

- Have difficulty with everyday memory such as forgetting where their locker is.
- Have difficulty carrying out a sequence of tasks such as following instructions in an exercise class.
- Find it challenging to follow a conversation or find the right word, for example, knowing they are looking for the washroom but unable to remember what it is called.
- Become confused about where they are.
- Experience changes in mood including becoming frustrated, anxious, or sad.
- Experience changes in the way their brain interprets sensory information, for example a black floor mat may look like a hole in the floor.
- Experience visual perception changes such as difficulty with spatial awareness and judging distances, seeing things that are not there (hallucinations), or believing things that are not true (delusions).
- Feel overwhelmed in noisy environments.
- Experience changes in behaviour such as repetitive questioning.

TYPES OF DEMENTIA

Dementia is an umbrella term for loss of memory and other thinking abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life.

- **Alzheimer's**
- **Vascular**
- **Lewy Body**
- **Frontotemporal**
- **Other** (including Huntington's)
- **Mixed Dementia:** Dementia from more than one cause

The Benefits of Becoming Age- and Dementia-Friendly

Age-friendly communities are designed to enhance health and well-being for people of all ages and abilities. These communities support and enable people to age in the right place with dignity, respect, and independence, and to stay engaged in all areas of community life.

Dementia-friendly communities are a natural extension of, and complement, age-friendly initiatives by adding depth with respect to the needs of people living with dementia. Dementia-friendly communities are committed to creating accessible, inclusive, and supportive spaces for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Age- and dementia-friendly communities are designed to help all residents live safely, enjoy good health, and stay involved and included.



Dementia and Recreation

The importance of physical activity and social connection

Being physically active is important for brain health and can have significant impact on the well-being of people living with dementia. Being physically active can delay the progression of and help manage dementia symptoms. Benefits of physical activity may include:

- Improved sense of well-being from social interaction.
- Decreased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Improved flexibility, strength, coordination, and balance leading to reduced risk of falls.
- Improved blood supply and nutrients to the brain which may help with thinking skills and memory.
- Improved confidence and self-esteem.
- Decreased risk of depression.
- Normal day-and-night routine and improved mood.
- Enhanced quality of life.

Strong social connection can help people live longer and healthier lives. Loneliness and social isolation have been linked to higher risk of illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, anxiety, depression, and dementia.

People living with dementia often stop doing the things they enjoy in their communities as their condition progresses. This can happen due to stigma associated with dementia, lack of dementia-inclusive spaces, and confusing processes to join in programs¹.

Activities such as walking groups, gardening, choir, cooking classes, volunteering opportunities, art and music programs can decrease social isolation. These initiatives can challenge the brain and may slow the progression of dementia symptoms.

¹ Dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide. (n.d.). [alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/19003-Sports_Leisure_guide_online.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/19003-Sports_Leisure_guide_online.pdf)

Reducing Barriers to Participation

People living with dementia may face barriers to participation in recreation and leisure activities in communities. An Alzheimer's Society UK survey in 2013 noted that people living with dementia said the most common barriers they faced were ²:

Lack of confidence

Worried about becoming confused

Worried about getting lost

Mobility and physical health issues

Not wanting to be a burden to others

Lack of appropriate transport

Stigma around dementia

Lack of support from others

Lack of dementia-inclusive activities

² Dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide. (n.d.). [alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/19003-Sports_Leisure_guide_online.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/19003-Sports_Leisure_guide_online.pdf)

Key actions to reduce barriers:

- Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of dementia and understand how to support participants living with dementia.
- Engage with the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador for information or training support.
- Create dementia-inclusive spaces that consider the needs of people living with dementia and their caregivers.
- Develop or adapt programs that are welcoming for individuals living with dementia.
- Provide understanding, emotional support, and patience.
- Provide program flexibility and encouragement to participants.

Communication

Dementia causes changes to the brain that, over time, may make it difficult for people living with dementia to say what they want or understand what others are saying. There are steps you can take to reduce misunderstandings and improve communication with someone living with dementia.

Verbal Communication Tips

- Speak slowly and clearly, while using an adult tone.
- Use a positive, calm, and respectful voice.
- Use short simple sentences.
- Talk in a quiet, distraction-free place.
- Give your undivided attention.
- Avoid criticizing or correcting.
- Ask yes/no questions rather than open-ended ones.
- Be patient, allow time for them to speak.
- Focus on one question at a time.
- Break down instructions into small steps.
- Repeat the names of people and things rather than using 'him' or 'it.'

Non-Verbal Communication Tips

- Approach from the front, without crowding their personal space.
- Use appropriate eye contact.
- Demonstrate actions and tasks or point at the things you are talking about.
- Write messages on paper.
- Watch for body language cues.
- Be mindful of your own body language.
- If the individual is open to receiving affection, hold or pat their hand or arm reassuringly to offer encouragement and express your care.

Be flexible, things may not go according to plan; the main thing is that everyone is having fun.



Dementia-Inclusive Recreation

Dementia-inclusive recreation is not focused on dementia but rather designed to be welcoming to people living with dementia. Caregivers are also considered in programming by accommodating carers who accompany an individual (e.g., extra seating, space, privacy if needed).

A person-centered approach recognizes that people living with dementia have unique preferences, experiences, and abilities that should be considered in programming. An individual's ability, diagnosis or disability should never be assumed. Abilities and preferences may change over time and from day to day making it crucial to pay attention and communicate clearly. Recreation leaders should be patient and adaptable in their programming.

Welcoming programs and spaces can be created through:

- A focus on inclusiveness and enjoyment for all participants.
- Developing programs based on what participants enjoy.
- Use of slower paced activities with modifications as needed.
- Avoiding excess noise and visual stimulation.
- Offering drop-in activities.
- Offering the program at the same time and day each week.
- Smaller class sizes.
- Offering short activities (about 30 to 45 minutes in length) with frequent opportunity for breaks.
- Providing choice for caregivers to be included in the activity.
- Ensuring the room temperature is comfortable.
- Providing shaded places to rest for outdoor activities.

Recreation leaders can help create dementia-inclusive spaces by wearing a name tag and introducing themselves each class. Patterned clothing can be confusing for some people living with dementia, wearing solid bright colours that contrast with the surroundings can be helpful for participants.

Designing Dementia-Inclusive Activities

People living with dementia may not feel comfortable participating in activities due to real or perceived stigma. Providing encouragement and support can help increase their confidence. Consider having greeters at the entrance when dementia-friendly activities are planned to welcome participants and help guide them to the activity room.

Provide close supervision

- Provide reminders or cues when needed for participants having difficulty remembering how to do the activity.
- Ensure exercises are done safely.
- Watch for non-verbal signs of difficulty (e.g. frustration, fatigue, pain, needing to use the washroom).

Use effective communication

- Use verbal and non-verbal cues to help maintain safe technique during exercise.
- Describe activities using words that are simple and the same (e.g., a seated forward bend is always called a seated forward bend).
- Demonstrate new activities.
- Repeat the cue for an activity more than twice, demonstrate slowly to allow participants time to process.
- Write down activities.
- Give direction or instruction one step at a time.
- Do not change activities quickly. Allow participants to practice the activity before moving on to the next one.
- Provide options when possible so participants can make their own choices.

Adapt activities

- Adapt activities so participants can be successful. Activities may become more challenging overtime as dementia progresses.
- Allow participants to simply watch if they seem to enjoy that more.
- Tailor the difficulty of the activity to the current ability of the person living with dementia.
- Make activities challenging yet achievable.

The table below, adapted from the Dementia-Inclusive Choices for Exercise – A Delivery Guide for Exercise Providers ([UW-1044-DICE_ExerciseGuide_Update_VF_Digital-1.pdf](#)) outlines exercise strategies that can be used when working with people living with dementia.

Activity	Tips
Introducing a new exercise	• Start with simple, large muscle groups exercises. • Breakdown exercises into parts and give one instruction at a time. • Demonstrate the exercise slowly. • Give participants time to practice the exercise before moving on.
Demonstrating an exercise	• Face the same direction as the participant. • Stand beside and slightly in front of the participant so they can copy your movements.
Space considerations	• Excess noise or visual stimulation can be distracting. • Mirrors can be confusing for some people. • Be aware of obstacles. • Ensure the space is well lit.
Planning for breaks	• Pay attention to how participants are feeling. • Check in with participants regularly. • If someone is feeling overwhelmed, take a break in a quiet area.
Consider including caregivers	• Provide options for inclusion.

Tips for Developing Dementia-Inclusive Walking Programs

- Ensure the trail or walkway is flat without large holes or obstacles.
- Two recreation leaders may be needed for larger groups, one to lead the group and one to shadow at the back of the group to ensure everyone is safe.
- Give options to include caregivers.

Tips for Developing Dementia-Inclusive Art Programs

- Offer paint brushes with different handle sizes.
- Use non-toxic paints.
- If painting on white paper use a different colour tablecloth so the paper is easier to see.
- Give participants creative options and choice.
- Offer two or three colour choices at a time, too many choices may be overwhelming.
- Be aware of paint lids that may be hard to open.
- Give options to include caregivers.

Tips for Developing Dementia-Inclusive Community Gardens

- Gardening may trigger memories for some people. Pulling up potatoes, picking green beans, or rummaging through a garden shed may be familiar activities that help some people remember their own garden.
- Find ways to build connections between gardeners.
- Provide opportunity for intergenerational gardening programs.
- Create shared intergenerational spaces (e.g., community gardens with playgrounds) that bring people of all ages together.
- Involve people living with dementia in garden design and choosing what to plant.
- Ensure the garden is accessible for people using mobility aids or have low vision. Make hard surfaces even, mark trail edges so they stand out, and paint handrails a bright colour.
- Have a quiet space for people to take a break.
- Have clear visual access to washrooms.
- Create a well-defined single route path that is colour contrasted against the grass.
- Have a variety of seating choices that are bright in colour so they can be easily seen.
- Use trees or umbrellas for shade.
- Use raised planters that are suitable for standing and seated in wheelchair positions.
- Appeal to as many senses as possible with the use of aromatic and colourful plants, water features for gentle background noise, and features that attract wildlife such as bees and birds.
- Avoid using harmful or toxic plants.
- If outdoor space is limited, consider creating smaller garden spaces inside.





Dementia-Inclusive Spaces

For an individual living with dementia, the design of the environment can be incredibly important for well-being and independence. Simple changes to the physical environment in community spaces can have significant benefits for people living with dementia. Dementia can impact a person's ability to translate information from the environment to actions. This means that the environment can be used to provide extra 'clues' to promote independence. For example, using directional signage that includes words and clear pictures at all decision points can help people find the room they are looking for independently.

Dementia-friendly design considers the changes people experience when living with dementia. Design principles aim to reduce stress and help people stay as independent as possible. These inclusive design principles will also support people with other health conditions as well as physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.



Dementia-Inclusive Design Fundamentals Checklist

Navigating leisure centres or community spaces can be difficult. The table below provides suggestions on how to make spaces more dementia-inclusive.

Feature	Dementia-Inclusive Design	Rationale
Building Entrance	The entrance is accessible and has a level approach. There is access for people with mobility aids.	Obstacles increase chances of tripping or catching on mobility aids.
	The entrance has a clearly visible, easy to read sign which describes the building function.	This can help reassure people living with dementia of their destination and how to enter the building.
	Entrance mats do not present a trip or slip hazard and are not solid black in colour.	For some people a black mat will look like a hole in the floor and people may try to step over it.
	The main reception desk is visible from the entrance door with a sign indicating its purpose. There is also a space to be seated when speaking to a staff member.	Immediately knowing where to go for help will reduce stress over feeling lost.
Signage and Wayfinding	Signs have clear colour contrast between writing and the background.	Contrasting colours will be easier to see.
	Signs use low glare materials or coatings that reduce reflections to improve visibility.	Laminated paper signs can be hard to see due to the glare.
	Signs are legible, use simple descriptive language, with mixed case (i.e., not all upper-case letters). Signs have easy to understand pictures or graphics to enhance understanding.	Signs provide clues to enable people living with dementia to find their way.
	Signs should be at eye level, around 4 feet from the ground.	Signs posted at eye level are easier to see.
	Signs are fixed to the doors they refer to, not on nearby walls.	Signs are easier to see and understand when they are attached to the door they refer to.
	Directional signs are used to direct people to key areas including activity rooms, washrooms, exits.	There should be directional signs throughout the building at all decision points.

Lighting	▪ Spaces have good levels of natural and/or artificial light which is bright and uniformly distributed across the space (does not produce shadows).	▪ People living with dementia can misinterpret their surroundings due to poor lighting. Adequate lighting also supports people with low vision.
Use of Colour Contrast	▪ The colour of the flooring contrasts with the colour of the walls. ▪ The colour of the doors contrasts with the colour of the walls. ▪ The colour of furniture and fixtures contrast with their environment.	▪ As people's eyes age, particularly if they have dementia, they lose ability to notice changes in colours. Contrasting colours provide a visual break between items to ensure greater visibility.
Acoustics	▪ Activity areas are not beside busy areas which generate noise.	▪ Noises can be overwhelming for people living with dementia. They may have reduced ability to filter out background noise which may cause distress.
	▪ Get participant feedback on music volume.	▪ If using music for a program, turn the volume down all the way before pressing play and gradually turn up the volume to find a comfortable level that suits the needs of the participants. Ask participants if they can hear it but also watch for body language and facial expression if someone finds it too loud or quiet.
	▪ There are quieter spaces available for people living with dementia to use.	▪ A quiet space for people living with dementia and their caregivers can reduce stress and anxiety.
	▪ In large rooms there is a room divider to subdivide the space and reduce noise.	▪ This can reduce auditory and visual distractions.
	▪ Loud items such as coffee grinders, TVs, and PA systems are used at a minimum.	▪ People living with dementia can become alarmed by sudden unexpected sounds.
	▪ Arrange furniture so people living with dementia can face the source of any sound.	▪ If a person can see the source of the noise, they are more likely to recognize what the sound is and know how to respond.

Stairs	▪ There are easy to grip handrails located on both sides of all stairs and ramps in contrasting colour to the wall.	▪ Handrails need to be highly visible (contrasting colour) and easy to grip for people with low vision.
	▪ Light is bright and glare-free.	▪ Glare causes visual discomfort and is often misinterpreted; shadows can be seen as objects or holes.
	▪ Edges to steps are clearly contrasting in colour with treads and risers.	▪ Contrasting colours make it easier to see the steps.
Washrooms	▪ There is a washroom close to main activity rooms in the building.	▪ To maintain dignity and independence the washroom must be visible and easily reached from the activity room.
	▪ Accessible toilets are provided that have grab supports, contrasting toilet seat colour, and space for a wheelchair.	A contrasting toilet seat colour (for example, a black seat on a white base) can make it easier to see.
	▪ It is obvious how the door lock operates (it is traditional in appearance and understandable). Lock signs can be helpful.	▪ To maintain dignity, it should be obvious how to lock and unlock the door when inside.
	▪ Flush levers and faucets are traditional in appearance and simple to operate. Hot water taps have anti-scald valves. Handwash signs can be helpful.	▪ A person with dementia may not understand the danger of hot water. Anti-scald devices will prevent scalding.
	▪ Toilet roll holders are simple to operate, contrast with the wall behind and are preferably domestic style in their design.	▪ Familiar devices are easier to manage and can increase independence.
	▪ There is an alternative to hand dryers to dry hands.	▪ Hand dryers can be a worrying source of noise for people living with dementia. Providing hand drying options gives people choice.

(source: Environments for Ageing and Dementia Design Assessment Tool-v.2 © DSDC, University of Stirling)

Awareness and Training

The following resources offer essential information and training materials to support greater understanding and awareness of dementia, helping individuals and organizations provide better care and support.

- **Active for Life – Recreation NL:**
files.constantcontact.com/ac37d75f001/7a5809a9-8c23-4e04-8cdc-eca301b4f68d.pdf
- **Dementia-Friendly Training for businesses including recreation facilities is offered by the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador.**
Contact: info@alzheimernl.ca or 1-877-776-0608 to inquire.
- **Dementia-Inclusive Gardens and Outdoor Environments:**
enablingenvironments.com.au/uploads/5/0/4/5/50459523/gardens_that_care.planning_outdoor_environments_for_people_with_dementia.pdf
- **Dementia-Inclusive Planning and Design Guidelines:**
sfu.ca/demscape/knowledge-mobilization/dementia-inclusive-planning-and-design-guidelines.html
- **Dementia Sensitivity and Engagement Training is offered by the Arts and Aging Network.**
Contact: info@artsandaging.com or 709-763-6634 to inquire.
- **Dementia UK awareness video: Let's talk about dementia:** rb.gy/pwnrr2
- **Government of Canada Video series:**
 - Help reduce the stigma behind dementia: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/help-reduce-stigma-behind-dementia.html
 - How to interact with someone living with dementia: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/video/how-interact-someone-living-dementia-30.html
- **iGeriCare Lessons** (igericare.healthhq.ca/en/lessons) and resources that allow individuals to learn about dementia at their own pace, developed by McMaster University
- **Online training (McMaster Optimal Aging Portal):**
 - mcmasteroptimalaging.org/e-learning/dementia
 - mcmasteroptimalaging.org/e-learning/dementia-risk
- **Online training: Dementia Resources for Eating, Activity, and Meaningful Inclusion:**
learn.the-ria.ca/groups/dream/
- **Online training: Dementia-Inclusive Choices for Exercise:** learn.the-ria.ca/groups/dice/

Useful Resources

- **Dementia-Friendly Canada:**
alzheimer.ca/en/get-involved/become-dementia-friendly/dementia-friendly-canada
- **Dementia-Friendly Communities | Well-Being NL:** dementiafriendlynl.ca/
- **Dementia-Friendly Design:**
alzheimer.ca/nb/sites/nb/files/documents/DIRC_General_v3.pdf
- **Dementia-Inclusive Design:**
brainxchange.ca/Public/Resource-Centre-Topics-A-to-Z/Design-and-dementia
- **Dementia Wellness - Physical Activity:** dementiawellness.com/plwd/physical-activity/
- **Physical Activity and Alzheimer's Disease Toolkit:**
braininstitute.ca/resources/guidelines-and-toolkits/physical-activity-and-alzheimers-disease-toolkit#:~:text=Regular%20participation%20in%20physical%20activity,improve%20general%20cognition%20and%20balance.
- **Tips for Virtual Exercise Programs:**
learn.the-ria.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DICE-Tips-for-Virtual-Exercise-Programs_V1_20210917.pdf

Funding Opportunities

- **Accessible Taxi Program:** gov.nl.ca/sswb/disabilities/accessible-taxi-program/
- **Accessible Vehicle Funding:** gov.nl.ca/sswb/disabilities/accessible-vehicle-funding/
- **Accessibility Grant:** gov.nl.ca/sswb/accessibility-grant/
- **Active NL:** gov.nl.ca/tcar/funding-programs/active-nl/
- **Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Communities Program:**
gov.nl.ca/seniors/grants/age-friendly/
- **Community Garden Support Program:** gov.nl.ca/releases/2024/ffa/0223n05/
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program:**
gov.nl.ca/sswb/grants/nl-transportation/
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative:**
gov.nl.ca/seniors/grants/seniors-social-inclusion/
- **New Horizon for Seniors Program:**
canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/new-horizons-seniors.html
- **Regional Wellness Coalitions:** gov.nl.ca/hcs/healthyliving/wellnesscoalitions/
- **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant:**
td.com/ca/en/about-td/ready-commitment/funding/fef-grant

