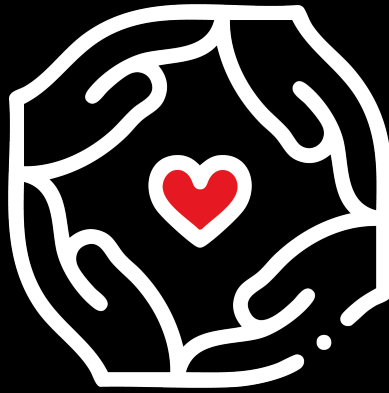




SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND ACCESSIBLE CURLING PROGRAM

Club Participation & Evaluation Process Guideline

Curling Ontario | 2026–2027 Season

Questions? Please contact:

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Curling Ontario's Safe, Inclusive, and Accessible Curling Program is a voluntary accreditation initiative that supports curling clubs in creating environments where everyone feels welcome, valued, and able to participate fully.

Launched through a province-wide pilot, this program was developed to support curling clubs in fostering greater inclusion, accessibility, and safety—key elements for the sport's future growth and sustainability in Ontario. Curling clubs are vibrant and varied, and this program is designed to help them celebrate their strengths while highlighting opportunities to grow and better serve their members and communities.

The program supports clubs through a guided process that begins with a structured first year of mentorship, program assessments, and plans for improvement. This initial phase will build the foundation for long-term growth as well as lead to the opportunity to become officially recognized as a Safe, Inclusive, and Accessible Accredited Club. Clubs earn and maintain accreditation by progressing through each stage (tier) of the program, gaining official recognition as a Safe, Inclusive, and Accessible Accredited Club along the way. Accreditation is maintained through ongoing annual evaluations, allowing clubs to demonstrate continued commitment to inclusion and accessibility.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Provide actionable, practical guidance to help clubs create inclusive, accessible, and safe spaces.
 - Empower clubs through a one year-long mentorship and tailored resource support.
 - Clubs may apply and request additional mentorship in subsequent years of the program for ongoing support to elevate their level within the program.
 - Offer a clear pathway to accreditation and recognition of inclusive practices
 - Build a culture of continuous improvement and accountability across Ontario's curling network and value/ visibility in the community.
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OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This program is grounded in the following values:

- Everyone deserves to belong – Curling spaces should reflect the diversity of our communities.
 - Progress is a process – Lasting change happens step-by-step, and every effort matters.
 - Support over scrutiny – This is a growth-focused program, designed to empower, not punish.
 - Shared learning – Mentorship, collaboration, and storytelling fuel community change.
 - Safe sport is inclusive sport – Safety, accessibility, and equity are deeply interconnected.
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KEY DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Safe	A curling environment that protects the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of all participants.
Inclusive	A space where everyone — regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, beliefs, religion, income, ability, or background — feels welcome, respected, and supported.
Accessible	A club that actively works to promote physical, communication, technological, social, and financial avenues to participation.
Mentor	A trained volunteer from the working group assigned to support a club during their first year in the program. Mentors offer guidance, encouragement, and help navigating resources.

Program Checklist	A structured tool that allows clubs to review their policies, practices, and physical space in relation to safety, inclusion, and accessibility standards.
Accreditation	Official recognition from Curling Ontario that a club meets the program's standards for safe, inclusive, and accessible operations.

CLUB PARTICIPATION PROCESS

1. Registration

- Clubs express interest in the program by completing a short online registration form.
- Once registered, clubs receive:
 - A welcome package with program information, an overview of timelines, and contact details.
 - A comprehensive package of resources
 - A digital copy of the Program Checklist.
 - Assignment of a dedicated Mentor from Curling Ontario's IDEA Working Group.

There is no cost to register or participate in the program.

2. Year-Long Mentorship

Each club is paired with a Mentor for the duration of their first year in the program. Mentors are experienced volunteers with a background in curling operations and a demonstrated commitment to advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) within the sport. They are selected for their ability to guide, encourage, and support clubs through meaningful and practical implementation of inclusive practices.

Mentor responsibilities include:

- Helping the club interpret and navigate the Program Checklist.

- Listening to club challenges and helping identify workable solutions.
- Providing or recommending resources, templates, or guidance.
- Maintaining regular communication throughout the year.
- Holding regular virtual meetings (in a group setting with other clubs assigned to the mentor) with the club's leadership team, club working group or any designated club lead to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps.
- Encouraging and celebrating club progress.
- Connecting clubs to Curling Ontario staff when additional support is needed.

*Mentors do not evaluate clubs and are not responsible for scoring submissions.
Their role is strictly supportive.*

3. Navigating the Checklist

The Program Checklist (one checklist per pillar) is the foundation of the accreditation process. It provides clubs with a clear, step-by-step way to assess their current practices and identify areas for growth. Built around three key pillars—**Safe Sport, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), and Accessibility**—the checklist highlights the standards that matter most for creating welcoming and sustainable curling environments. Each pillar is supported with practical criteria and resources, helping clubs celebrate what they already do well while guiding them toward improvements that benefit their members, volunteers, and communities.

The checklist is designed to allow you to self-evaluate at any time. We remind you of the essence of this program being on long-term growth. The intent is not for clubs to accomplish all criteria in the first year or even two years. This program is designed to support clubs on the journey of EDI, Safe Sport, and Accessibility we all need. Although there is an evaluative component to gain accreditation, our goal with the checklist is to be as transparent as possible. We are providing you with all criteria, how they are evaluated, the final scoring scheme, and definition of the star (point) structure. This will allow you to self-evaluate yourself throughout your process and with your mentor as well.

Each criteria is scored out of three stars (or points). As most criteria have some subjectiveness to them or clubs can achieve each criteria to various levels of sophistication, the three star or point system allows the evaluator a sliding scale based on the club's submission and progress in each criteria.

The checklist highlights areas with an X where resources (via templates, policies, training, best practices) are available for club use. These resources are not mandated for use, but are designed to support you and take additional workloads off your plate. Where possible, we have provided as much detail as possible in these resources. We encourage clubs to use the templates and customize to your reality and what the club can manage.

The checklist also has Non-Negotiables, also highlighted by an X in the corresponding criteria. These Non-Negotiables are minimum standards for any club to gain accreditation. Regardless of your overall score, if you do not meet 2 out of 3 score in all of these Non-Negotiable criteria, you will be ineligible to gain any accreditation.

Clubs are encouraged to:

- Review the checklist collaboratively with their board or staff members.
- Collaborate with other clubs to build on proven practices, share tools, and grow together as a community.
- Connect with their club's community, including members, volunteers, and athletes, to shape improvements that reflect their culture, needs, and lived/living experiences.
- Work gradually, identifying both strengths and growth areas.
- Refer to available resources or seek guidance from their Mentor.
- Document each club's current status, track progress, and record any improvements or updates over time

Many checklist items include or reference supporting resources, such as templates, guides, photos, or policies. These are meant to empower clubs to take action — even if they are new to accessibility or inclusion work.

4. Submission of Criteria

When a club is ready to be evaluated, they prepare and submit:

- Supporting documentation (e.g., revised policies, training records, signage photos)
- A brief Reflection Summary (template provided in Appendix D), describing their experience, learnings, and remaining goals

Mentors may review materials with the club before submission, but the responsibility to submit rests with the club.

5. Evaluation by Curling Ontario

Curling Ontario staff will review all submissions using a standardized evaluation rubric.

*The criteria used in the evaluation process are outlined in the Program Checklist. You can view the documents in our **Club Resource Library**:*

- [Accessibility Checklist](#)
- [Safe Sport Checklist](#)
- [Inclusive Checklist](#)

During the evaluation, staff may:

- Contact the club for clarification or follow-up.
- Resubmit any items after the evaluation is completed for reconsideration
- Consult the Mentor for context (not evaluation).

Outcomes:

Clubs may earn accreditation in one, two, or all three program pillars — Safe Sport, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), and Accessibility. Accreditation is awarded at the Bronze, Silver, or Gold level based on the club's overall implementation of checklist criteria within each area.

- In Progress: Clubs that fall below the Bronze threshold receive tailored feedback and support to help close identified gaps and move toward accreditation.
- Accredited: Clubs that meet the minimum point thresholds in a given area receive formal recognition at the appropriate tier. Recommendations will be provided for clubs to continue to progress through the pillars.

Scoring Tiers:

Each pillar is assessed independently, with accreditation levels determined by the number of points achieved:

Tier	Safe Sport	EDI	Accessibility
	Out of 23	Out of 36	Out of 20
Accessibility Plus			18+ pts 90%
Gold	18 + pts 80%	28+ pts 80%	16+ pts 80%
Silver	16+ pts 70%	25+ pts 70%	14+ pts 70%
Bronze	13+ pts 60%	21+ pts 60%	12+ pts 60%
Not Yet Eligible	Below 60%	Below 60%	Below 60%

6. Recognition & Promotion

Clubs that achieve accreditation will be:

- Issued an official Certificate of Accreditation
- Provided with digital badges, signage, and social media graphics
- Featured in Curling Ontario newsletters, website, and social media
- Included in a public-facing directory of Accredited Clubs

Curling Ontario will provide clubs with accreditation badges to proudly display in their facilities. Each club's progress through the tiers will also be recognized in our online Club Directory and featured on our website. In addition, clubs will receive a digital promotional kit to help share their achievements with their members and community.

7. Annual Evaluation

Once accredited, clubs will complete a shorter annual evaluation to maintain status. This includes:

- An updated checklist summary
- A brief progress update
- Identification of new or ongoing challenges
- Clubs who do not maintain accreditation may be in a Revoked status, breach key principles of the program or fail to maintain the program as a priority.
- Non-Renewed are clubs who are transitioning or re-evaluating the program on a one year basis.

Mentors are not reassigned after Year 1, but staff support and updated resources remain available.

APPENDIX A: SUGGESTED PROGRAM TIMELINE

This timeline is meant to serve as a helpful guide — not a strict requirement. We understand that many clubs operate with limited staff, volunteers, and/or resources, and will need to move at their own pace. The program is designed to be flexible and supportive, with year-round mentorship and no penalties for taking more time. Whether you complete the checklist in a few months or over the course of a full season, the goal is meaningful progress and learning.

Month	Activity
September	Register & meet Mentor
October–December	Begin checklist; identify quick wins
January–March	Continue improvements; request support as needed
April–May	Finalize documentation and prepare submission
June–July	Submit for evaluation; receive feedback
August	Promotion and celebration of accredited clubs

APPENDIX B: SUPPORTING RESOURCES & TEMPLATES

The program includes a Resource Library developed by Curling Ontario and the Program Working Group. This library supports clubs at all levels of experience.

Clubs will have access to:

- Templates (e.g., EDI policies, safe sport commitments, volunteer roles)
- Sample layouts (e.g., facility signage, inclusive locker room design)
- Digital accessibility guides (e.g., screen reader tips, font/contrast standards)
- Best practices (e.g., menu planning for dietary needs, inclusive prize options)
- Reference links (e.g., AODA compliance, community partnership tips)
- Curling Ontario Staff Support – Available for direct inquiries and troubleshooting (erin@curlingontario.ca)
- Mentorship – Year-round access to an assigned program Mentor
- Resource Hub (Coming Soon) – Centralized access to downloadable tools and templates
- Workshops & Webinars – Optional seasonal training sessions for clubs and volunteers

Examples of Resource Areas:

- Facility Accessibility
 - What is “obstructed” vs. “clear” space?
 - Examples of accessible parking signage and locker room design
 - Lists of available grants and grant writing support tools
- Digital Accessibility
 - Font size guidelines
 - What makes a website compatible with screen readers?
 - Menu formatting and accessible navigation
- Programs & Participation
 - Inclusive events and prize models
 - Outreach to underrepresented communities
- Club Culture & Policies
 - Welcoming Committees & volunteer role description.
 - Inclusive language in club communications

Mentors can help clubs identify which resources best match their needs.

APPENDIX C: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: What if we don't meet all criteria this year?

It is not the expectation for you to achieve Gold status right away. The program is built on continuous learning, development, and growth for your club. We know the checklist is a multi year project and the intention is for each year, the club to increase its annual score by accomplishing new criteria's (or improving existing criteria) and thereby elevating clubs status (Gold, Silver, Bronze) throughout the program and over several years of focus. You'll receive feedback and guidance from Curling Ontario. Clubs can resubmit once ready — there is no penalty for taking more time to grow.

Q: Can small or rural clubs participate?

Yes. The program supports clubs of all sizes, contexts, and resources.

Q: What if our Mentor becomes unavailable?

Contact Curling Ontario. You will be reassigned or provided with alternate support.

Q: Will this program become mandatory?

No. This is a voluntary initiative. The focus is on encouragement and progress — not compliance.

Q: Who should be involved in the process at our club?

We recommend involving a mix of board members, staff, and volunteers — particularly those involved in programming, facility management, or communications. Forming a small working group is encouraged.

Q: What if we already have some policies or practices in place?

That's great! The program helps you identify and build on what's already working while providing guidance for further development.

Q: Can we participate if our facility is shared or municipally owned?

Yes. Many clubs operate in shared-use facilities. The program encourages clubs to collaborate with landlords or municipalities where needed.

Q: Do we need formal written policies to qualify?

Wherever identified within the checklist, formal policies are required to achieve a full score. Formal policies help both the governance and operations of the club and when relevant, can hold the club and its members accountable to inclusive, safe, and accessible

behaviours. Weighted scores may support clubs who have introduced informal practices with goals of aspiring to implement formal policies.

APPENDIX D: CLUB REFLECTION SUMMARY

Club Reflection Summary

[Link to electronic submission of the Club Reflection Summary](#)

Club Name: Maple Valley Curling Club

Accreditation Tier: Tier 1 – Safe Sport

What We Did: Tell us about your accomplishments!!

Over the past season, our club updated We provided... We introduced...

What We Learned:

We learned that....We also discovered that.....

Next Steps/Goals:

In the next year, we plan to.....We would also like to develop.....

Do you have any suggestions for the Club Accreditation Program improvements?

Submitted By:

Maple Valley Curling Club Accreditation Committee