



RCA HOTEL ACCESSIBILITY TOOLKIT: A BASIC GUIDE

The RCA Hotel Accessibility Toolkit is a globally recognized guide drafted by [Red Clay Advisory](#) for hotel and resort accessibility. The toolkit offers pointers for hospitality stakeholders, particularly those who are looking to make their facilities more accessible and inclusive.

As an open-source resource, the toolkit is free and available to potential and existing hotel owners, investors and stakeholders.

How can you develop an accessibility plan for your hotel?

Developing an accessible and inclusive plan for your hotel can help ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities, feel welcome and able to enjoy your facilities. If you are a first-time investor or an experienced hotel chain investor thinking of accessibility for your hotel or resort, this piece provides a step-by-step guide on how to build an accessibility strategy from inception. We hope you find this useful.

So, you might be wondering, what should you do if you want to develop an accessibility plan for your hotel? Here are some steps you can take to create an accessible and inclusive plan:

Step 1: Consult with experts

Step 2: Identify potential barriers to accessibility

Step 3: Make physical changes

Step 4: Train your staff

Step 5: Solicit feedback



Step 1: Consult with experts

Consider consulting with experts, such as disability advocacy groups or disability service providers, to better understand the needs of people with disabilities and how to create a more accessible and inclusive environment.

You can also engage the services of a trusted hospitality consultant to help review your existing hotel facility or proposed design, and liaise with these advocacy groups to build an accessibility plan.

Step 2: Identify potential barriers to accessibility

Identify any physical or communication barriers that may prevent people with disabilities from accessing your hotel facilities. For example, are there steps at the entrance, narrow doorways or hallways, or inadequate lighting? Is there a functional elevator?

Step 3: Make physical changes

Make physical changes to your hotel facilities to remove barriers. This could include installing ramps or lifts, widening doorways, providing accessible parking spots, or ensuring that all areas of the hotel are well-lit.

Make sure that all hotel technology, including websites, reservation systems, and room amenities, are accessible to people with disabilities. This could involve offering braille menus or large-print materials, or providing assistive technology in guest rooms.

Tip: Studies show that 15 per cent of people around the globe are living with disabilities and in Nigeria, that number is as high as 1 in 4. A smart business person would not want to miss out on this market. However, not only is this smart, but it also represents inclusion.



Step 4: Train your staff

Hotels should endeavour to train their employees to be sensitive to the needs of guests with disabilities. Train your staff to be more inclusive and accommodating of guests with disabilities.

This could include teaching them how to communicate effectively with guests who are deaf or hard of hearing, or how to provide assistance to guests with mobility impairments.

Step 5: Solicit feedback

Enlighten the public on what your organization is doing to be more accepting of persons with disabilities. Engage people with mobility issues in focus group sessions prior to the design and development of your accessible accommodations.

Regularly solicit feedback from guests with disabilities to ensure that your hotel remains accessible and inclusive. This could involve conducting surveys or focus groups, or simply encouraging guests to provide feedback directly to staff.

To enable you to develop a sustainable accessibility plan, we detail below some of the general strategies you can think of implementing for your hotel.

By prioritising these accessibility considerations, your hotel can not only create an inclusive facility and environment, but also improve your brand reputation, attract customers who value inclusiveness, and potentially increase your revenue.

S/N	Areas to Consider	Strategy to implement
1	Booking and Hotel Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The first thing to consider when making your hotels more accessible is the booking experience. ● If an online booking portal is involved, your website should be made accessible. ● The use of keyboard navigation, appropriate alt-text for images, and design for screen reader accessibility ● Make sure the right font types and sizes, colours and headings are used. ● If accessible rooms will be provided, the number and availability status should be clearly stated. ● Guide dogs, service animals and other emotional support animals/pets should be allowed. ● Ensure animal welfare by making your hotel pet-friendly.
2	Parking Lot and Entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Right from the parking lots, your hotels should be making a statement to show accessibility ● Parking areas should be wheelchair-accessible and the driveways should be level. ● If there are steps at the front door, a side ramp can be provided to accommodate wheelchairs. Otherwise, the ground should be flat enough for wheelchairs and other mobility scooters to pass across.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entrance doorways should be wide enough as well, at least 36 inches wide. • There should be a working elevator or stairlift if your hotel has more than one floor. • The design of elevators should also factor in the weight of power wheelchairs.
3	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The front desk staff should be patient and willing to help the elderly and people with disabilities. • Your whole staff should be properly trained to provide support to such persons. • Assistive devices like visual and hearing aids, wheelchairs, hoists, profiling beds and other equipment should be made available to borrow at the front desk.
4	Rooms and Restrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair-accessible rooms should also be made available on the ground floor or on the immediate upper floors. • These separate rooms with the proper facilities should be designated in advance. • The doorways should be made wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs. • If the rooms are separately designated for people with disabilities, the door's peephole should be located at a convenient height. • The beds should be of adjustable height. • The lights, blinds and doorbells should be remote-control operated. • Provision of audiovisual smoke detectors and other audiovisual equipment. • Availability of closed-captioned television decoders and telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) • The restrooms should be designed with wide doorways, adjustable grab rails, raised toilet

		<p>seats, low mirrors and basins and hands-free taps. Wheel-in showers could also be provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panic buttons, emergency alarms and a front door alerting service should be provided.
5	Other Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal facilities like the restaurant, bar or lounge should be located on the ground floor, if possible. • The ground should also be flat enough • Signages should be displayed around the hotel. They should be simple, clear and bold enough to read



How can Red Clay help?

As tourism and hospitality consultants, we have vast experience in handling hotel and resort investments in West and East Africa for our clients.

We will also work with you through the following phases of the project:

1. We will conduct the feasibility studies to ensure that your proposed hotel project is feasible and viable, and guide you to make the best decisions.
2. We work with your hotel architect (or provide a specialist hotel architect on recommendation) to conceptualize and design an accessible and inclusive hotel for you, based on your budget.
3. If it is an existing hotel, we will conduct a comprehensive hotel accessibility audit, and engage with a disability focus group to identify the areas for improvement
4. We will develop and facilitate a customized disability support training programme for your staff to ensure that they are trained to cater to PWDs
5. We will also help you build a DEI strategy to ensure that your facilities are accessible and inclusive to all for use, work, stay and play, including persons with disabilities.

In essence, we are there for you all the way through till you launch your hotel or resort and open up to customers.

About Us

Red Clay is a specialist advisory practice focused on harnessing the socio-economic potential of sustainable tourism development for cities, states, regions and countries in Africa. We specialize in strategy advisory for destination development and management, ESG advisory, feasibility studies, market research and intelligence, policy advisory, and capacity development for tourism and hospitality-focused businesses, agencies, organizations, and governments in Africa.

Our team members have worked in the tourism industry in the UK, West and East Africa, and are experienced and passionate about sustainable tourism as an instrument for societal change, with its promotion of heritage, the celebration of culture, and contribution to identity.

See our company profile [here](#)