

# Becoming Para Ready

a toolkit for  
Rowing Organizations in British Columbia



Special thanks to The Steadward Centre at the University of Alberta!

## About Becoming Para Ready

Overview from the Steadward Centre:

The Becoming Para Ready (BPR) resource has been developed as an introductory guide to provide coaches and club administrators with the knowledge, confidence, and tools to be more proactive in inclusion.

Para Ready clubs can proactively plan, prepare, and communicate the ways they can, and cannot, support all athletes rather than reacting when contacted by athletes experiencing disability. With continued commitment, more inclusive sport experiences are possible.

The 3 main categories in this toolkit (perspective, planning and programming) can be viewed as steps on your journey towards building an environment that is inclusive to athletes experiencing disability.

Statement from Rowing BC:

This tool has been adapted from the [Steadward Centre materials](#) to be specific to rowing in BC. Many parts of this will require regular updating. If you see anything that is missing or is outdated, please contact Rowing BC ([lisa.tschannen@rowingbc.ca](mailto:lisa.tschannen@rowingbc.ca)) with that information.

This toolkit is designed to help rowing clubs to prepare themselves to welcome rowers to the club and club programming. For those who are interested in competition, there is information about classification and competition format on the Rowing BC website [Para Rowing page](#).

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## How to use this toolkit...

This toolkit is to be used as a starting point that can be drawn upon to help rowing organizations, leaders, clubs and coaches consider how they can do disability inclusion more effectively. It is not to be used as a 'how to guide'. Clubs should take the key principles and P's from this toolkit and adapt them to ways that can best support the community they serve.

### Step #1 - Reflect on the BPR Principles

A first step is to gain a sound understanding of the 5 BPR principles on the next page. These common threads will help you situate the BPR framework more effectively.

### Step #2 - Understand the P's of Para Readiness

Go through each of three main P categories (perspective, planning, programming) in the BPR framework in order and consider which ones are most relevant to you and your unique context.

### Step #3 - Take action towards BPR

The BPR framework is to be used as a starting point. Some of the P's require relatively simple tasks (these can be done quickly or with few resources) and some require more complex tasks (these might take more time or resources). Decide on some actions you can take to get started today.

## Glossary

**Ableism** - is discrimination in favor of able-bodied people.

**Accessibility** - the quality of being able to be reached, entered, or used. The concept of accessibility can be applied to physical spaces, social groups, and written materials.

**Athlete-Centered Coaching** - a coaching philosophy that emphasizes a collaborative and individualized approach to meeting the needs and goals of the athlete. This is a best-practice for coaching all athletes.

**Classification** - a process in which an athlete is determined to be eligible to compete internationally in a specific adaptive category. Classification is only required for international competition (and the preparation for international competition.)

**Disability** - is a result of the interaction between a person with an impairment and their environment. Models of disability recognize that disability may be experienced differently for people with very similar impairments based on their situation. Learn more about models of disability [HERE](#).

**Inclusion** - removing barriers to participation for people based on disability, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, and more. Barriers to participation can be related to physical spaces, social groups, and written materials.

**Intersectionality** - refers to the various parts of a person's identity that combine to impact the barriers to participation for that person. This can include disability, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, and more.

**Lived-Experience** - the expertise that an individual can only gain by experiencing barriers and disability. Lived-experience must be included in all parts of the process whenever possible.

## The BPR Principles

The 5 BPR principles were created to support all invested partners to think about how they can collectively provide quality and safe experiences for all athletes with a disability. The principles are high level common threads that should be (re)considered when you are working through the entire BPR framework.

### 1. Be proactive

- Plan for inclusion. Take initiative to improve inclusion for your program and anticipate the needs of others
- All people benefit from an inclusive approach

### 2. Include the voices and choices of people experiencing disability

- Center the disability community in the creation of inclusive programs
- Include people with lived experience at all stages of your program and practice development and delivery

### 3. Be reflective and purposeful in your actions

- You can have a positive impact, it takes time and continued commitment to improve inclusion
- Your attitudes and behaviours set the tone for disability inclusion in your context

### 4. Disability is one facet of identity

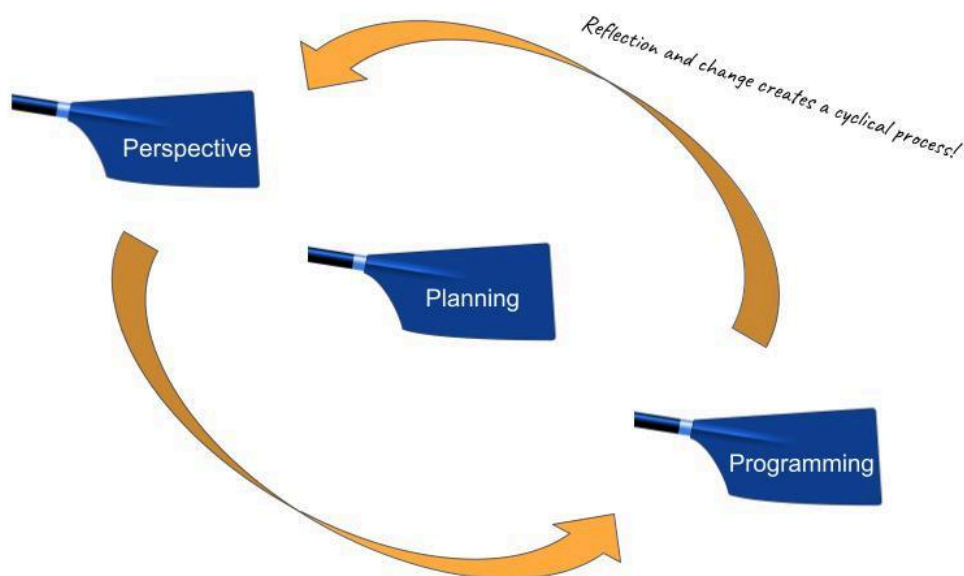
- Consider intersectionality: people experiencing disability have diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives

### 5. Disability is a social construct and impairment is experienced on a continuum

- People experience impairments, that may seem similar, very differently
- Disability has been created through social understandings and it may vary by social, cultural, and individual interpretations

## The BPR Framework [2.0]

The BPR framework (2.0) was created to simplify the P's. This modified framework will make it easier to teach the P's in a way that will encourage preparing with purposeful reflection and planning towards becoming para ready. The Framework consists of three P Groups, with more P's to consider in each group.



### Perspective

- Philosophy
- People
- Policy

### Planning

- Place
- Price
- Promotion
- Partnerships
- Pathways

### Programming

- Preference
- Participation
- Practice
- Pedagogy

## Perspective

### Philosophy

- Understanding your views on disability, sport and society

*Challenge: Create a personal statement about how you view and how you will implement an inclusive approach into your practice.*

This is a good time to reflect on what you know and what you want.

- What do you know about disability?
- What do you know about para sport?
- What do you know about [models of disability](#)? (medical, social, etc.)
- What do you know about how the traditions of rowing impacted people who were not upper class, white, able-bodied men?
- What is the ideal you envision for your rowing space?
- What are reasonable steps along the way to the ideal?
- What education do you and others in your organization need?

### People

- Inclusion can only be effective if everyone is on board with a common vision or understanding

*Challenge: Plan meetings to bring your personal inclusion philosophy or statement to all the key invested partners within the club or program and encourage them to do the same!*

How will you get buy-in from coaches, board members, and other rowers?

- Keep “Inclusion” as a standing item for every board meeting. Even when there is nothing new to discuss, there is a regular reminder of its importance.
- Create a way to engage all members with the values of the organization. This creates accountability and awareness.

### Policy

- After reflecting on various perspectives, it is time to write a Club/Coach Inclusion Commitment Statement, which should be made public and posted wherever possible: Club, social media, integrated in Code of Conduct, etc.

*Challenge: Work with the club’s board or management team to create an inclusion commitment statement*

- Does your organization have a strategic plan, mission statement, and/or vision statement? Can you tie language about inclusion to that?



- If your organization does not have these kinds of statements, this can be created in order to formalize the values of the group.
- Having clear policy creates accountability for everyone.
- Here is a [template](#) that your organization can use as a starting point.

## Planning

### Place

- Facilities, parking, and accommodation (accessibility checklist)

*Challenge: Conduct an accessibility review of your facilities to identify any potential barriers.*

- Use this [tipsheet](#) adapted from one published by the Rick Hansen Foundation to evaluate the physical accessibility of your space.
- It is important that the entire visit to the space is considered. That does not mean that your space needs to be perfect, but points of concern are relevant to know and to be able to communicate.
  - Transportation access
  - Parking
  - Clear pathways
  - Washrooms
  - Water access
  - Equipment spaces
  - Meeting spaces
  - Doors
  - Signage
  - Emergency information and equipment

### Price

- Cost is a barrier for many people experiencing disability.
- Consider various/variable fee structures and pay what you can.

*Challenge: Discuss possible methods of reducing costs for athletes with disabilities with your board and/or research grants and other funding sources that may assist with reducing the cost for athletes with disabilities.*

- Life is more expensive when there are limitations on where you can live or when you need specialized equipment for daily activities. The cost of sport can be high, and for something that isn't required for daily living may be hard to justify. What can you do to reduce cost as a barrier to participation?
- Check out this list of [grant resources](#)

### Promotion

- Don't say you are inclusive if you are not

- Let people know who you are, what programs you have, and how your programs are inclusive (or not) and to whom. Communicate this messaging in person, through physical media, and online/digitally.
- Don't forget to ensure that your promotional materials are available in accessible formats. There are organizations that can help with this, but you can also just try a screen reader yourself or ask people in your organization to check it.

*Challenge: Review your current promotional materials (brochures, website, social media accounts, etc.) and identify areas in which you could include wording or pictures that would help an individual recognize that your club/program is open to individuals with disabilities. Don't assume athletes will just show up!*

- Include Alt Text for any pictures and images.
- If you are not sure about the accessibility of your promotional materials, check out this [media accessibility checklist](#) created by rower Danielle Main.
- Make sure that any images or text that are used as part of your promotions are things that you can actually do.
- Include information about what your organization can support. An example of an option that takes care of coaches and makes the expectations clear to participants is: "if you are able to get up and down from the ground, including with the use of tools." If your space or staff has limitations, be clear. It is also a good idea to include a statement about who should be contacted if someone is unsure if their needs can be met.

## Partnership(s)

- Create your network:
  - Disability/disability sport community
  - Health and rehabilitation centres
  - Parents, support workers, and caregivers

*Challenge: Contact at least 3 organizations in your community who could help your club identify and/or support athletes with disabilities.*

- Check out this list of [potential partners in BC](#)
- Engaging partner organizations to create programming for their groups means less work for you, a head start on collaboration techniques, easier promotion

## Pathways

- Not all athletes will want to be Paralympians
- Have multiple programming pathways to cater for different skill and interest levels

*Challenge: Review the Long Term Development model and identify how and when athletes with disabilities may enter and leave your sport. Then, review your programs to identify gaps in*

*addressing the potential entry and exit points for athletes with disabilities.*

- This is true for all rowers regardless of abilities.
- How do your programs address the goals of all rowers?

## Programming

### Preference

- Making sure your programs offer different levels of integration and inclusion is important to give new (and existing) athletes choice

*Challenge: Look at your programs and make sure you have offerings that reflect different levels of the inclusion spectrum.*

- Some athletes will be most comfortable around others with similar skills, abilities, and goals.
- Some athletes will want to participate in more varied groups.

### Participation

- Quality parasport experiences should be at the forefront of all programming decisions (i.e., belonging, autonomy, mastery, challenge, engagement, meaning)
- Have a broad understanding of athlete classification for competition, if applicable

*Challenge: Review your programming to identify strengths and areas of improvement for addressing the 6 areas of Quality Participation. Or, learn about the classification process for your sport (your national sport organization would be a good place to start when looking for information).*

Quality sport experiences need:

- Belonging - Being a part of a group
  - What is in place at the club to support new rowers in feeling that they belong? Create buddy systems or hold socials that are not intimidating for new rowers. For para rowers this could also serve the purpose of managing equipment.
- Autonomy - Having the ability to make choices
  - Does your membership understand how to help without infringing on another person's autonomy and agency? Teach asking questions in a way that assumes ability rather than inability.
- Mastery - Experiencing success
  - This is not the same as winning or being perfect! Find ways to acknowledge the progress that happens at all levels.
- Challenge - Feeling appropriately tested
  - The level of challenge an athlete may want can be tied to their goals for participation (and maybe competition). How do coaches at your club provide the right level of challenge to push rowers to improve?

- Engagement - Feeling involved
  - Individuals experiencing disability's involvement can often be overlooked. How do coaches and rowers engage with each other to make decisions and be involved?
- Meaning - Making it matter
  - Understanding what a rower wants to get out of their experience will make you a better coach and peer. Conversations about goals should be part of the initial process and revisited on a regular basis. Consider the "why" of your practices; make sure you know, so that it can be shared with others.

## Practice

- Reciprocal mentorship (work in collaboration with athletes) is the cornerstone to coaching for parasport

*Challenge: Familiarize yourself with practice adaptation frameworks (e.g., [TREE](#), [STEP](#), [CHANGE IT](#)) to (re)consider your practice design*

## Pedagogy

- Athlete-centred coaching is critical when working with para athletes to ensure you are co-creating practices and sport experiences in partnership with them (e.g., reciprocal coaching)
- A coach's pedagogy (approach to teaching) should be focused on creating quality experiences through close athlete collaboration and the consideration of professional, sport and disability knowledge.

*Challenge: Practice listening to and co-creating practices with your athletes.*