

**The Loaded Ladle
Accessibility Assessment
Report 2022**

Completed by Tanisha Garing

Community Kitchen Accessibility Coordinator

February 2022

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Role Description

The Loaded Ladle's Community Kitchen Accessibility Coordinator was an 8 week long role – the project first started on January 3, 2022 and was completed on February 26, 2022. As per its Canada Summer Job description, this role was described as follows:

The Loaded Ladle is looking to hire a part-time staff member to run an accessibility assessment on the kitchen space, servings, volunteer engagement, and social media presence and make recommendations to the Ladle about how to improve their accessibility. This will include conducting an accessibility audit, facilitating a workshop or presentation about the Loaded Ladle's accessibility, and developing a report or policy with recommendations, resources, and next steps.

Tasks Include:

- *Find or create an audit checklist for assessing the accessibility of the Loaded Ladle's key operations, including:*
 - *Physical kitchen space*
 - *Volunteer tasks and engagement*
 - *Servings*
 - *Social media (Instagram & Facebook)*
- *From the audit, make recommendations for improving the accessibility of the Loaded Ladle's key operations.*
- *Compile the findings of the accessibility audit and your recommendations in a format of your choice, such as a report or policy.*
- *Deliver an informal presentation or workshop to the Loaded Ladle's staff and Board members to present your findings.*
- *Attend monthly Board meetings and meetings of the Anti-Oppression Committee.*
- *Attend staff meetings as needed.*

Defining Accessibility

A Multitude of Definitions

Accessibility is defined many different ways – there is by no means a “one size fits all” definition of accessibility. However, this project relies on multiple definitions, including accessibility as “the design of services, or environments” wherein recipients or users are “not excluded [...] on the basis of experiencing” specific barriers. Thus, accessibility involves how an organization actively includes, accommodates, and provides access to all who seek out their services as well as those who wish to participate in these services in the future.

Resources

<https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/definitions/>

<https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/05/16/what-we-mean-when-we-talk-about-accessibility-2/>

Access is Not Universally Experienced

As varying definitions of accessibility exist, there also exists multiple ways access work may be implemented – what may be considered accessible for one person may not necessarily be accessible for another. Aiming to provide the most accessible services must involve a working knowledge of different individual’s varying abilities. For example, different access needs may include, but are not limited to, accommodating:

- Vision loss
- Hearing loss
- Literacy and memory (potentially related to dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, dementia, stress, etc.)
- Physical ability (related to mobility, dexterity, strength, pain levels)
- Use of tools – access work must accommodate the use of assistive tools (e.g. screen readers, hearing aids, speech recognition software, mobility devices)

Resources

<https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/what-does-accessible-mean/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-people-disabilities/act-summary.html>

Accessibility Statement

The following is a draft accessibility statement The Loaded Ladle may choose to use or reference when creating their own statement. Sharing an accessibility statement is strongly encouraged – the Ladle should explicitly acknowledge its shortcomings and/or limitations and commit to ongoing efforts to increase access, inclusivity, and comfort for the community. This statement should also be easily accessed online and shared with the community widely.

The Loaded Ladle is a diverse, community collective who oppose any form of injustice, and values care and solidarity – as such, we are committed to providing accessible, inclusive, and comfortable experiences to all those we share community with.

We recognize accessibility is not “one size fits all” and acknowledge current accessibility measures do not address all existing barriers different community members encounter and experience. The Loaded Ladle is actively working to address these limitations to provide more comfortable, barrier-free experiences for all our community members.

In February 2022, an Accessibility Audit was conducted to assess four key elements of our operations:

- Physical kitchen space
- Volunteer tasks and engagement
- Servings (the overall experience of attending a food serving)
- Social media

This audit was completed to identify accessibility gaps and provide recommendations, resources, and direction on how to improve access work within The Loaded Ladle. Specific findings and recommendations of this audit will be released soon.

As our efforts are ongoing, we welcome any feedback on how we might improve our accessibility practices. To share any related input with us, please contact loadedladleimpact@gmail.com or loadedladleinfo@gmail.com.

Procedure

This project involved multiple stages of independent research, online community engagement, and report writing – a specific project breakdown is as follows:

1. Ongoing research on municipal and provincial accessibility standards, resources, etc.
2. Community outreach and collecting community feedback
3. Creating auditing checklists for systematic assessment
4. Assessing accessibility based on audit checklists and community feedback
5. Creating Accessibility Assessment Report to summarize findings and recommendations

Collecting Community Feedback

Accessibility Reflection

A feedback collection tool was developed and distributed to collect community input and evaluate accessibility through a comprehensive, considerate lens. Feedback was collected from February 4th to February 18th via Google Forms and was promoted on Instagram, Facebook, and The Loaded Ladle's subscription-based email newsletter.

The Google Forms, titled "[The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#)" can be accessed online, but is not actively accepting responses.

Optional Prize Entry

Participants were provided the option to enter into a prize draw for a chance to win one of three food related prizes. Three winners were selected randomly using an online random number generator. Each participant opting into the prize draw was assigned a valid number according to the order in which their response was submitted.

The [Google Random Number Generator](#) was used to select three prize winners.

Creating Auditing Checklists

Based on community feedback and research on existing accessibility checklists, a customized checklist was created to systematically score the Ladle's accessibility. While this checklist specifically evaluates the Ladle's physical kitchen space, volunteer tasks and engagement, servings, and social media, access work underlies many more operations and processes, despite not being explicitly examined within this role.

That being considered, this checklist also aims to acknowledge the less recognized practices existing within accessibility work, like workplace culture and attitudes and community perception.

An in depth overview of the audit's findings will centre both community feedback and audit results.

Resources

<https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/information-for-people-who-have-disabilities-that-affect-communication/resources/accessibility-checklist/>

<https://www.respectability.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Disability-Accessibility-Checklist.pdf>

Four (4) Categories of Assessment

1. Physical kitchen space
2. Volunteer tasks and engagement
3. Servings
4. Social media presence (Instagram & Facebook)

1. Physical Kitchen Space

Current Accessibility Arrangements in Kitchen

A brief summary of the information provided on pg. 9 through pg. 12 of this report – design-wise, the Ladle’s kitchen should not be considered a barrier-free, accessible space. The kitchen is especially inaccessible for people seated in wheelchairs and for those requiring seated alternatives to standing.

Below are comments from the Building Manager at the time of the kitchen build (2016) via Kavita Siewrattan, DSU Director of Operations. Highlights include the kitchen meeting all applicable standards and codes at the time, specific accessible features (intended or not) of the kitchen, and guidance on future accessibility planning –

*“When constructed[,] the kitchen would have been built to all applicable Kitchen Standards and codes in place at the time. **I do not believe that any specific arrangements for accessibility outside of these provisions would have been made. The entrance door I believe meets accessibility standards as did the serving counter at the time of installation. The multi-compartment fridges and freezers, while not directly envisioned as accessibility products, do allow for accessible access.** I am sure there are initiatives which could be taken to make this end or any kitchen space on campus more accessible and I know that new building code requirements, which changed in 2019 and will change again prior to 2023, will provide greater code requirements for accessibility [than] previously existed. Specifically what these are, I do not know[.] However[,] **the accessibility office might be best equipped to have this knowledge and provide an assessment for future planning.**”*

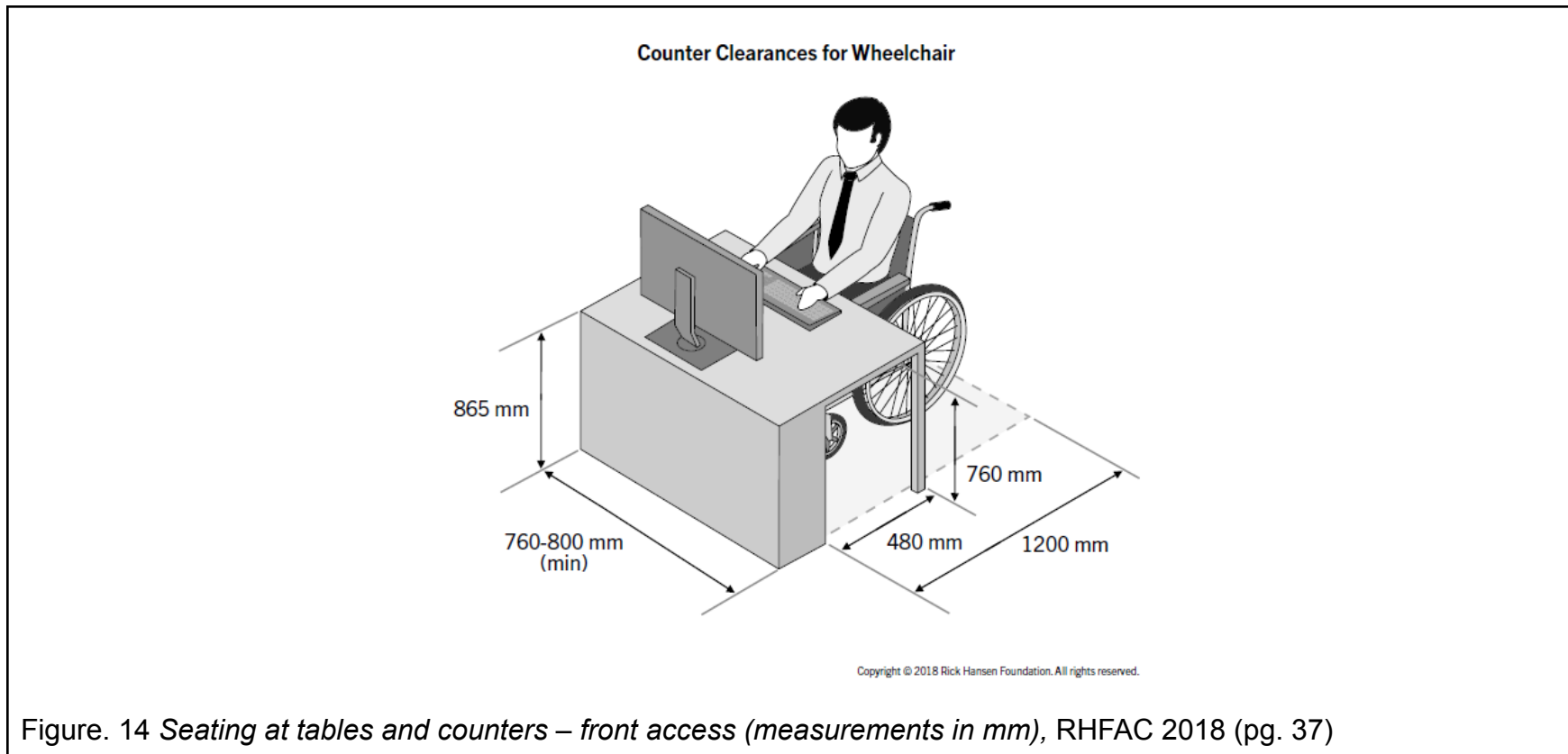
Kitchen Measurements

Below are measurements of six (6) different areas of the Ladle's physical kitchen space. Each set of measurements reference standards described in the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations (NSBCR) from 2020 or the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Professional Handbook (RHFAC) from 2018. **Based on these standards, each identified area of the kitchen is designated as meeting or not meeting these standards.**

	Measurement (inches and mm)	Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations 2020 OR RHFAC 2018 Standards	Notes
Doorway	36 inches, 914 mm	Meets Section 3.8.3.6. (2) Doorways and Doors (NSBCR 2020)	Refers to Section 3.8.3.6. (2) Doorways and Doors – <i>“Every doorway that is located in a barrier-free path of travel shall have a clear width not less than 800 mm when the door is in the open position”.</i>
Width of prep table to serving counter	33.6 inches, 853 mm	Does <i>not</i> meet Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel (NSBCR 2020)	Refers to Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel – <i>“... the unobstructed width of a barrier-free path of travel shall be not less than 920 mm”.</i>
Width of prep table to commercial appliance wall	48 inches, 1219 mm	Conditionally meets Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel (NSBCR 2020)*	This area includes the commercial oven and its horizontally swinging doors, which, when opened, would interfere with this area being barrier-free.

<p>Width of prep table to handwashing sink/ dishwasher wall</p>	<p>39.75 inches, 1010 mm</p>	<p>Meets Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel (NSBCR 2020)</p>	<p>Refers to Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel – “... <i>the unobstructed width of a barrier-free path of travel shall be not less than 920 mm</i>”.</p>
<p>Width of prep table to refrigerator/freezer wall</p>	<p>38.25 inches, 972 mm</p>	<p>Conditionally meets Section 3.8.3.2. (1) Barrier-Free Path of Travel (NSBCR 2020)*</p>	<p>This area includes both a refrigerator and freezer section with horizontally swinging doors, which, when opened, would interfere with this area being barrier-free.</p>
<p>Height of prep table</p>	<p>35.6 inches, 904 mm</p>	<p>Does <i>not</i> meet recommendations on counter clearance height; does <i>not</i> meet recommendations for clear floor space under a countertop (pg. 37, see Figure.14 below, RHFAC 2018)</p> <p>Meets public standard height of 36” or 920 mm (pg. 54, RHAC 2018)</p> <p>Does <i>not</i> meet standing counter height standard of 42” or 1,066 mm (pg. 54, RHAC 2018)</p> <p>Does <i>not</i> meet Section 4.2.1, pg. 153 (RHFAC 2018)</p>	<p>RHFAC comments on Counter Clearances (pg. 37) state “<i>the recommended counter height for a person seated in a wheelchair is 865 mm</i>” and recommended dimensions for clear floor space are a depth of “<i>480 mm [.] for knee space under the counter</i>”, which is not satisfied.</p> <p>RHFAC Section 4.2.1 (pg. 153) refers to “<i>ensur[ing] the height of counter surfaces ranges from 730 mm to 860 mm above the finished floor</i>”, which is not satisfied.</p>

*Note: With the language “barrier-free path of travel” used in the NSBCR 2020, it is unclear if these areas account for elements that may interfere with such a path of travel, such as the opening of appliance doors into the path. Assuming when opened into the path, that a door would result in the path being interfered with and thus creates a barrier to passing, then the path should *not* meet this standard.



Reference Photos for Measured Kitchen Areas

The photos below were taken to reference specific kitchen areas, where measurements were collected, to compare against barrier-free design standards and other accessibility recommendations –



According to the NSBCR 2020 and RHFAC 2108, only certain elements of the physical kitchen space satisfy these regulations. While the space must be evaluated not on its separate components, but on its components all together – as a whole – **the Ladle's kitchen should not be considered barrier-free.**

Resources

<https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/docs/Interim-Accessibility-Guidelines-for-Indoor-and-Outdoor-Spaces.pdf> (see page 7 for specifications on measurements for people using certain mobility aids)

<https://accessibilitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Business-of-Accessibility-AV-Handbook-August-2019.pdf> (scroll to Accessibility Checklist)

<https://www.thespine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/adaptable-housing.pdf>

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/1-1462/nova-scotia-building-code-regulations-users-version-en.pdf>

<https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/2019-07/rhfac-professional-handbookdec2018.pdf> (used to evaluate specific areas of the kitchen and their dimensions)

Audit Findings –

Findings based on the following audit statements:

There is a clear, easy to read and understand statement either in the kitchen and/or relevant documents about staff and volunteers being free to remove themselves and/or take a break from the kitchen for any reason.

Audit Score: Sometimes (1)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to evaluate the Ladle's physical kitchen space – beyond its limitations as a space that is not fully barrier-free and accessible – specifically *how* the space itself may contribute to less accessible experiences. The kitchen is a small commercial space that may be loud, hot, overstimulating, and overall, physically uncomfortable to work in due to the nature of kitchen work. Regardless of the haste and rush the kitchen team may experience, having a clear awareness of the kitchen's supportive nature and overall highly considerate work environment is important.

Most kitchen procedures *imply* the Ladle prioritizes the safety and comfort of all team members. Specifically, the virtual [COVID-19 Safety Training for Volunteers](#) includes clear statements and direction on resting and taking breaks in the kitchen. Additionally, the Kitchen Team and Volunteer Coordinator create a welcoming, approachable environment and values the experiences of volunteers.

Based on personal experience, I was provided clear direction about the kitchen space (e.g. where I could locate most ingredients, tools, and/or equipment, what kitchen specific language is most effective, and when to use it) and received multiple “check-ins” to ensure I felt comfortable, was drinking enough water, and was taking breaks from kitchen tasks whenever necessary.

Recommendations: Create a specific kitchen statement on the prioritization of health, safety, and personal comfort within the kitchen (specifically considering experiences of stress, fatigue, anxiety, other common experiences of young people, students, or other vulnerable communities, etc.). This statement may also include:

- The recognition of the kitchen’s limitations (e.g. the small kitchen space is more likely to get loud and hot very quickly, smaller areas or pathways make it more likely to bump into another person, etc.)
- An emphasis on staff and volunteers maintaining an awareness of personal health, safety, and comfort
- Highlighting what assistive/adaptive tools are available to use in the kitchen

This statement should be clearly identified in the kitchen itself, distributed to volunteers virtually, and/or explicitly stated on The Loaded Ladle’s website and social media platforms.

Assistive/adaptive tools (e.g. step stools, cut resistant gloves, standing mats, etc.) are available to use throughout the kitchen.

Audit Score: Sometimes (1)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to evaluate whether or not, and to what extent, assistive/adaptive tools, which create more comfortable, barrier-free experiences, are provided to staff and volunteers in the kitchen.

At this time, the kitchen provides standing mats throughout frequently trafficked areas, and there is at least one step stool available to use for difficult-to-reach areas of the kitchen.

Recommendations: The kitchen would benefit from the addition of more assistive devices. According to an American National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) article, assistive, or adapted, tools and devices are designed to “[make] cooking easier and safer for everyone [and] will ensure involvement of all participants”

<https://www.nchpad.org/1674/6893/Adapted~Kitchen~Tools~~Utensils~~and~Accessibility>).

The Ladle should strive to provide easier and safer kitchen experiences in this way and consider equipping the kitchen with more assistive/adaptive tools including:

- Cut resistant gloves (may benefit those whose fine motor skills or mobility may affect their ability to safely use kitchen equipment, like knives or other sharp tools)
- Multi-coloured or high contrast black and white cutting boards (for those with low vision or colour blindness where safely distinguishing foods on cutting boards may be difficult)

Resources

<https://www.nchpad.org/1674/6772/Adapted~Kitchen~Tools> (a short YouTube video)

<https://www.nchpad.org/fppics/Adapted%20Tools.pdf> (a PDF with pictures and tool descriptions)

<https://www.nchpad.org/1674/6893/Adapted~Kitchen~Tools~~Utensils~~and~Accessibility> (a short online article with list of accessible tools)

<https://www.eastersealstech.com/2018/03/07/7-assistive-kitchen-cutting-devices/> (a short article, specifically describing multi-coloured cutting boards, as well as other assistive devices)

<https://vision-forward.org/product/low-vision-bla> (includes item description)

Where appropriate, clear, easy to read and understand signage is used to identify products, equipment, and/or hazards.

Audit Score: Sometimes (1)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to determine whether or not sufficient signage exists throughout the kitchen. While some signage already exists, the kitchen would benefit from the addition of specific identifiers. The use of clear, easy to read and understand signage would benefit those moving throughout the kitchen, assisting staff and volunteers in easily identifying different areas of the kitchen (e.g. a hand washing only sink, a refrigerator compartment for specific food items only, a storage space for frequently used tools, etc.), including identifying potentially “higher risk” areas (e.g.

where commercial equipment and appliances are located), and for maintaining overall kitchen organization.

While the kitchen is a fairly small space and may be relatively easy to navigate, clear signage will aid an individual's overall sense of comfort within the kitchen and physical ability to move throughout the space with an active knowledge of its layout and potential hazards.

Recommendations: The kitchen would benefit from the addition of specific signage, which clearly identifies the following areas:

- Equipment – a simple kitchen map could be designed to identify large, high temperature commercial equipment. For example:



- More crowded storage areas (e.g. spice shelves in pantry area, bowl/lid/other container shelves in pantry area)
- Areas storing frequently used tools/equipment (e.g. knives, cutting boards)
- Areas storing sharps (e.g. knives, graters, food processors, etc.)

Resources

<https://eriecustomsigns.com/accessible-signage-guide>

2. Volunteer Tasks and Engagement

The Ladle relies heavily on its volunteer teams, and without volunteers, operations would prove more difficult and taxing for staff members.

As of February 2022 and according to the 2021/2022 [Volunteer Reports](#):

- Fifty-four (54) potential volunteers expressed interest in [volunteer opportunities](#)
- 32 of 54 (59%) completed volunteer shifts at least once
- 11 of 54 (20%) are actively volunteering

Active Ladle community partners include:

- Independent Living Nova Scotia
- SMU Learning Service
- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia
- John Howard Society of Nova Scotia (potential future partner)

Audit Findings –

Findings based on the following audit checklist questions and/or statements:

The Loaded Ladle offers a variety of different volunteer opportunities for different community members.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to identify how many and what type of different volunteer roles the Ladle offers – is the Ladle providing opportunities to those who have yet to be involved, but want to? *Who* do these opportunities attract? *Who* are we *not* attracting, but *would like to* attract?

The Ladle's core volunteer team are kitchen volunteers who directly participate in food preparation, servings, and kitchen cleaning. In addition to in-person kitchen volunteers, other virtual volunteer opportunities exist.

Virtual volunteering may include writing for the newsletter, formatting image descriptions for social media posts, recipe submissions, cookbook development, zine submissions and/or zine printing/binding, art submissions, food justice research, video editing, script development for future videos, etc.

With the addition of multiple virtual volunteer roles as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the Ladle provides many new opportunities for those with interests beyond directly volunteering in the kitchen, as well as to those whose access needs aren't currently accommodated in the kitchen.

A recent callout was made for volunteers interested in joining different Ladle committees – this callout was successful and resulted in a lot of new interest in these opportunities and/or volunteers eventually joining the following committees:

- Sexton Committee
- Anti-Oppression Committee
- People and Culture Committee
- Kitchen Committee
- Community Engagement Committee

Recommendations: The Ladle would benefit from continued efforts to:

- Engage volunteers from different communities who have an interest in food justice and the Ladle's overall work
- Engage more virtual volunteers by promoting these opportunities – emphasize the Ladle's search for community members with different abilities/interests/passions

To further engage different communities, the Ladle may consider collaborating with new community partners. For example, Hope Blooms organizes youth-oriented day camps every summer, some of which involve their Farming Coordinator and food-related activities/projects. Should enough resources be available, the Ladle and Hope Blooms could collaborate on one of the Ladle's virtual volunteer tasks, like creating youth-led, food-related zine content. Similar projects could be tailored to better suit the interests of other community partners, since Ladle may wish to centre university-aged students.

Different volunteer roles are described in detail.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to identify how detailed the Ladle's volunteer roles are. Accurate, detailed, and easy to read and understand descriptions help users better understand what each role involves, helping individuals select what role is best suited to their interests and abilities.

The Ladle provides details about each volunteer opportunity, what tasks a role involves, and what information is needed for a specific project to be completed. However,

[volunteer roles and volunteer project descriptions](#) could benefit from a more consistent description format for users to identify information easily and quickly.

Recommendations: Apply the same description format to communicate information about each volunteer role. Where possible, edit out any unnecessary words or phrasing

A standard volunteer description format may convey information about:

- What the specific role/project is
- Approximate time required for task
- Where to submit completed project to/contact for any inquiries/where to apply
- What The Loaded Ladle is looking for
- Why this project is important to The Loaded Ladle
- Important project information (where necessary)
- Examples (where necessary)

An example of this general organizational formula is applied below:

What the specific role/project is: **Art For Our Website/Instagram Posts/Posters**

Approximate time required for task: 20+ minutes

To apply, email: volunteer@loadedladle.com

What The Loaded Ladle is looking for:

- Images, like doodles and drawing, for our website
- Art to use on our *About, Volunteering, Join the Board, and Workshops* + pages

Why this project is important to The Loaded Ladle:

- We love to show off our personality as a grass roots, community-oriented organization and collaborative art helps us achieve this!
- We want our website to reflect this and help our community get acquainted with us before they even meet us

Important project information:

- Art should be black and white
- Background will be removed and made transparent
- Images will be black with a yellow background (like our logo and site design)
- Solid black (e.g like art seen in screen printing projects) will show up best!
- Small details may not appear clear on mobile devices, so avoid these

Image suggestions – feel free to create your own:

- Ladles, pots, other utensils, our kitchen appliances
- Pots and/or plates of food
- Aprons, oven mitts, baseball caps
- Beets, carrots, beans, etc.

Do these descriptions include accessibility notes and/or requirements?

Audit Score: Sometimes (1)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to identify whether or not the Ladle explicitly states if volunteer roles involve specific access requirements, which may limit individuals' ability to volunteer.

Specific access requirement statements may include making note of:

- Physical capacity
 - e.g. "Being capable of lifting *x number of pounds* is required to volunteer in the kitchen."
 - e.g. "While volunteering in the kitchen, staff sometimes handle heavy items, but you are not required or expected to do this as a volunteer."
- Technology requirements
 - e.g. "To write image descriptions for The Loaded Ladle's instagram, access to a reliable internet connection, mobile device, and/or computer is required."

Recommendations: Clear statements about specific access needs and limitations are addressed in *some* areas of the Ladle's volunteer procedures, including in the [COVID-19 Safety Training for Volunteers](#) orientation notes. This information is specifically found on slides 20, 21, and 22 under the heading "Accessibility Needs".

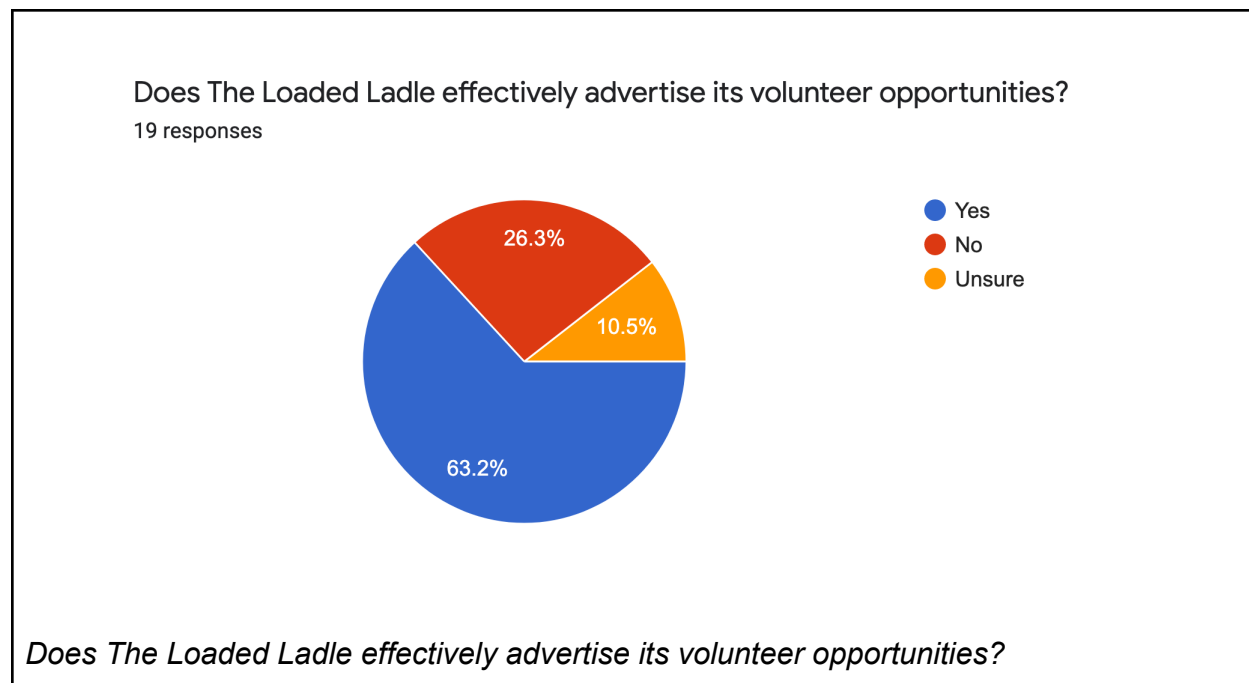
However, similar statements should be included across all platforms communicating this information. It is recommended that information about access requirements is included with other standard volunteer information and descriptions. This additional information can be included in the following areas:

- The [volunteering](#) page on The Loaded Ladle website – information about access requirements and limitations should be included in *all* volunteer role descriptions

- Instagram – this information should be clearly shared in hard posts and stories, perhaps in infographic style posts that highlight volunteer opportunities in general and/or in stories, which should be added to the Ladle’s “Highlights” (to ensure this information is pinned to the top of the Ladle’s profile).
- Facebook – similar to the above suggestion, volunteer roles *and* any access notes could be categorized into groups based on similar role descriptions and highlighted in individual posts to the Ladle’s *Home* page, perhaps in the same infographic style posts used on Instagram – depending on how posts are organized, Facebook posts could also be synced with what is posted on Instagram (this would likely be easier)
 - e.g. writing related projects (newsletter writers, image descriptions/alt text/long description writers) in one post
 - e.g. recipe related projects (recipe submissions, cookbook development) in one post
 - e.g. art related projects (illustrations, zine making, zine assembly, etc.) in one post

Volunteer opportunities are advertised effectively.

Relevant feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle’s Accessibility Reflection](#) is included below –

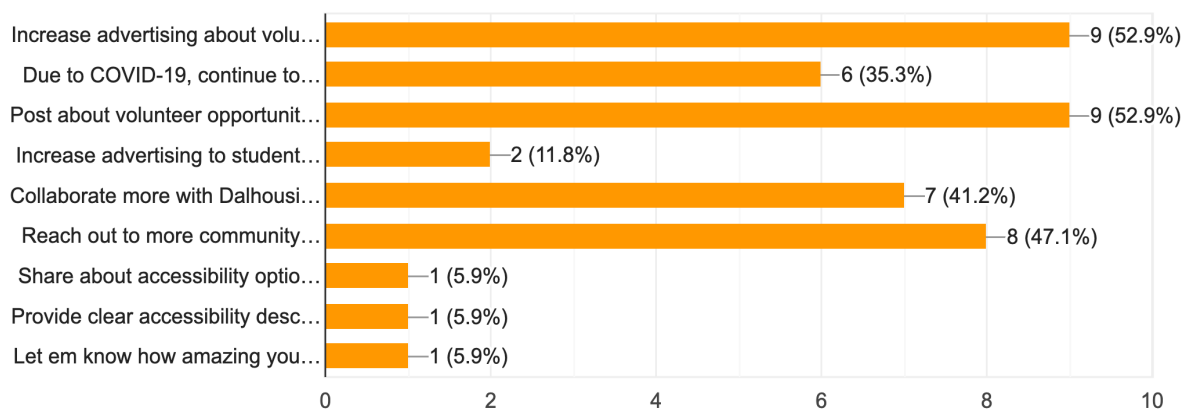


This reflection item received 19 responses

- 12 (63.2%) responded “yes”
- 5 (26.3%) responded “no”
- 2 (10.5%) responded “unsure”

How can The Loaded Ladle do better to engage all communities who may express interest in volunteering with us?

17 responses



How can The Loaded Ladle do better to engage all communities who may express Interest in volunteering with us?

This reflection item received 17 responses

- **“Increase advertising about volunteer opportunities” – 9 (52.9%)**
- “Due to COVID-19, continue to provide remote volunteer opportunities” – 6 (35.3%)
- **“Post about volunteer opportunities online more often (social media, website, newsletter)” – 9 (52.9%)**
- “Increase advertising to students on Sexton Campus” – 2 (11.8%)
- **“Collaborate more with Dalhousie University student-run societies” – 7 (41.2%)**
- **“Reach out to more community organizations to share this information” – 8 (47.1%)**

- “Share about accessibility options, most if not all positions I’ve seen I’m unable to do” – 1 (5.9%)*
- “Provide clear accessibility descriptions of volunteer positions (ie. is standing required, if so, how long)” – 1 (5.9%)*

*customized “other” response

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to determine if the Ladle's volunteer opportunities are advertised **consistently** and **frequently** enough, while also engaging communities interested in accessing these volunteer opportunities.

This item was also included to reference information collected from the Accessibility Reflection about whether or not:

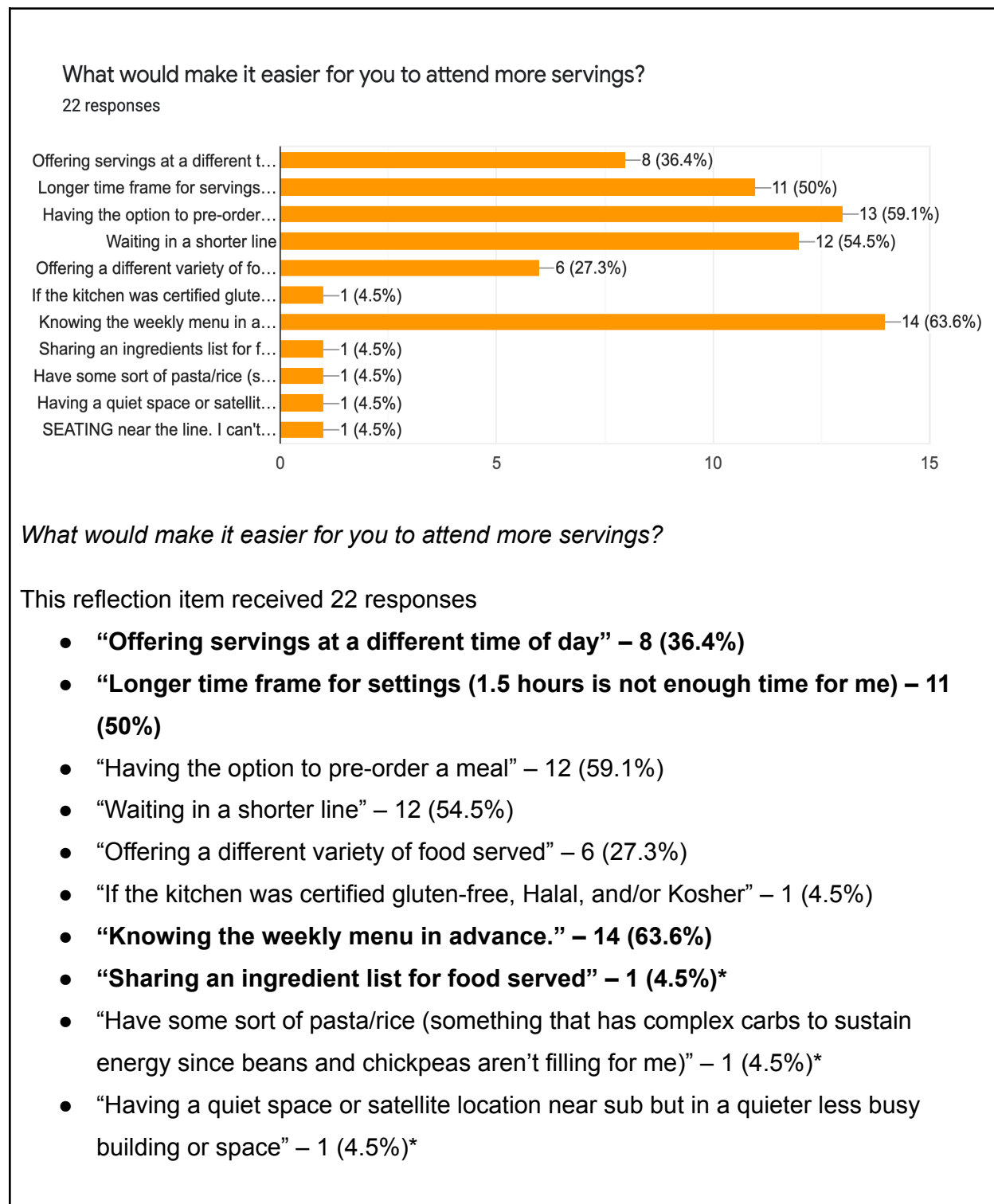
- The community is made aware of different in-person and virtual volunteer roles
- Volunteer opportunities reach communities who may want to engage with the Ladle, but haven't done so yet
- Current community partners (on and off Dalhousie University campuses) are consistently engaged
- The Ladle's network of community partners, specifically those seeking volunteer placements, is expansive enough to involve more community members and satisfy the Ladle's demand for volunteers

Recommendations:

- Develop more volunteer-related social media content
- Create a posting schedule for promoting volunteer opportunities
 - e.g. Every Monday Instagram and Facebook content is posted to inform about different roles and descriptions
 - e.g. Every other Wednesday volunteer call outs are made and/or notes are made when/if the Ladle reaches volunteer capacity, etc.
- Examine what community partners the Ladle actively interacts with and receives volunteers from
 - Identify other potential organizations the Ladle may wish to collaborate with

3. Servings

Relevant feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#) is included below –

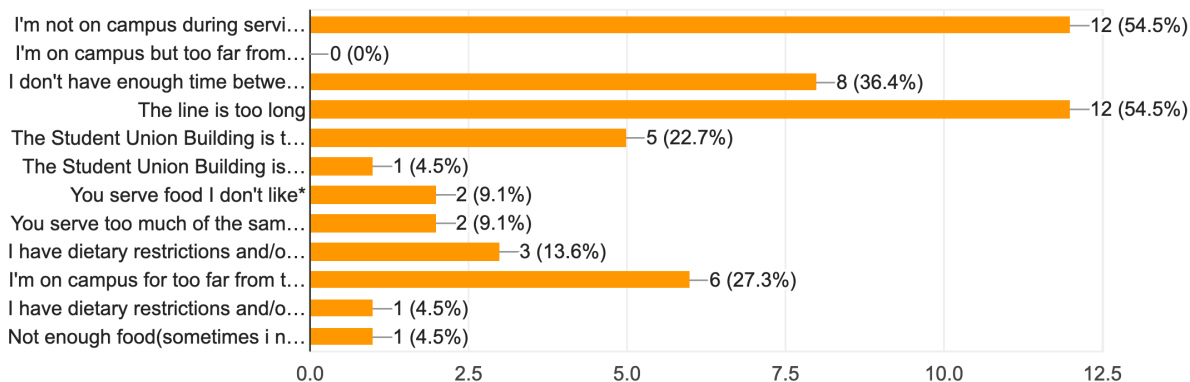


- *“SEATING near the line. I can’t stand for long periods of time, and often can’t access a meal because of this.” – 1 (4.5%)**

*customized “other” response

What limitations have you experienced that make attending servings more challenging?

22 responses



What limitations have you experienced that make attending servings more challenging?

This reflection item received 22 responses

- **“I'm not on campus during serving times” – 12 (54.5%)**
- **“I'm on campus but too far from the Student Union Building” – 6 (27.3%)**
- **“I don't have enough time between classes” – 8 (36.4%)**
- **“The line is too long” – 12 (54.5%)**
- “The Student Union Building is too busy and/or loud” – 5 (22.7%)
- “The Student Union Building is not physically accessible for me” – 1 (4.5%)
- “You serve food I don't like*” – 2 (9.1%)
- “You serve too much of the same food*” – 2 (9.1%)
- “I have dietary restrictions and/or food allergies that make it difficult to attend*” – 3 (13.6%)
- “Not enough food (sometimes I need 1.5 boxes to be full); small time duration so I can't get to ladle after/before my classes”* – 1 (4.5%)

*customized “other” response

Audit Findings –

Findings based on the following audit checklist questions and/or statements:

Is there seating available in the designated line up area?

Audit Score: No (0)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to recognize the physical access needs that those attending Ladle servings require, thus increasing their ability to access servings.

Specific feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#) is included below –

“...SEATING near the line. I can't stand for long periods of time, and often can't access a meal because of this.”

Recommendations: When concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic decrease and the Student Union Building begins to accommodate a more regular capacity, the Ladle might consider the addition of seating near the service line (ideally, consideration for this would take place earlier, prior to new pandemic-related developments).

Considerations:

- Budget (accessibility related grant for external funding?)
 - See **Appendix D - Funding Opportunities** of Nova Scotia's The Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities - <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/Municipal-Toolkit-Appendix-D.pdf>
 - Also see **Enabling Accessibility Fund** - <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/enabling-accessibility-fund.html>
- Communication
 - Who from the DSU needs to be consulted - the Director of Facility Operations?
 - Proposal to The Loaded Ladle Board)
- What Building Code standards relate to the addition of seating? – Is this addition possible based on these Building Code?

- What are the building capacity limits related to seating
- Does the DSU work with Building Managers familiar with up to date building codes, accessibility products, and future planning?

Serving time frame (12:30pm - 2:00pm) is sufficient for attendees' needs.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to examine whether or not the current time frame the Ladle serves food meets the needs of current (and hopeful) serving attendees.

Recommendations: Extend the schedule of daily food servings. Implementing this schedule change may involve a test period where the schedule is extended by, for example, a half hour, for one or two weeks. Staff, specifically core Kitchen Staff, should then evaluate whether or not this change has impacted the overall number of servings distributed.

Other important considerations may include:

- Kitchen staff capacity and long-term sustainability of lengthened servings
- Impact on length of kitchen shifts for staff
- Impact on length of kitchen shifts for volunteers
- Would the kitchen need to increase the amount of food prepared?
- What implications might this change have on staff pay, if hours are impacted?
- What implications might this change have on the kitchen budget, if more food is prepared?

There are multiple ways to access information about servings and different kinds of information about servings available.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to determine in what ways the community has access to information about servings and *what kind* of information is available to the community.

The Ladle provides information about weekly serving schedules on their Facebook, Instagram, and website – each platform includes this information in an easy to find location.

Daily updates including information about *what* is being served are posted via Instagram and synced Facebook stories on the day of servings – however, this information is shared infrequently.

Relevant feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#) is included below –

These comments express similar sentiments about wanting to know more information about *what kind of food* the Ladle is serving on a day-to-day basis and knowing this in advance to accommodate different people's needs, schedules, etc.

"I tend to find food to be repetitive. Last time you guys had beet pesto pasta which was a nice turn because it was filling and was different from the usual chickpeas or beans."

"... [I] need foods that are less messy, preferably that I could eat standing like sandwiches and bread"

"Not all info is posted on a timely basis, menus are posted inconsistently"

"Have some sort of pasta/rice (something that has complex carbs to sustain energy since beans and chickpeas aren't filling for me)"

"Sharing an ingredient list of food served"

Recommendations: Providing more information about servings would benefit attendees – being aware of specific information in advance of serving days would help attendees be better informed about the Ladle accommodating their food preferences (e.g. if an attendee was aware of *what* the Ladle is serving in advance, they would likely be more confident and comfortable attending a serving).

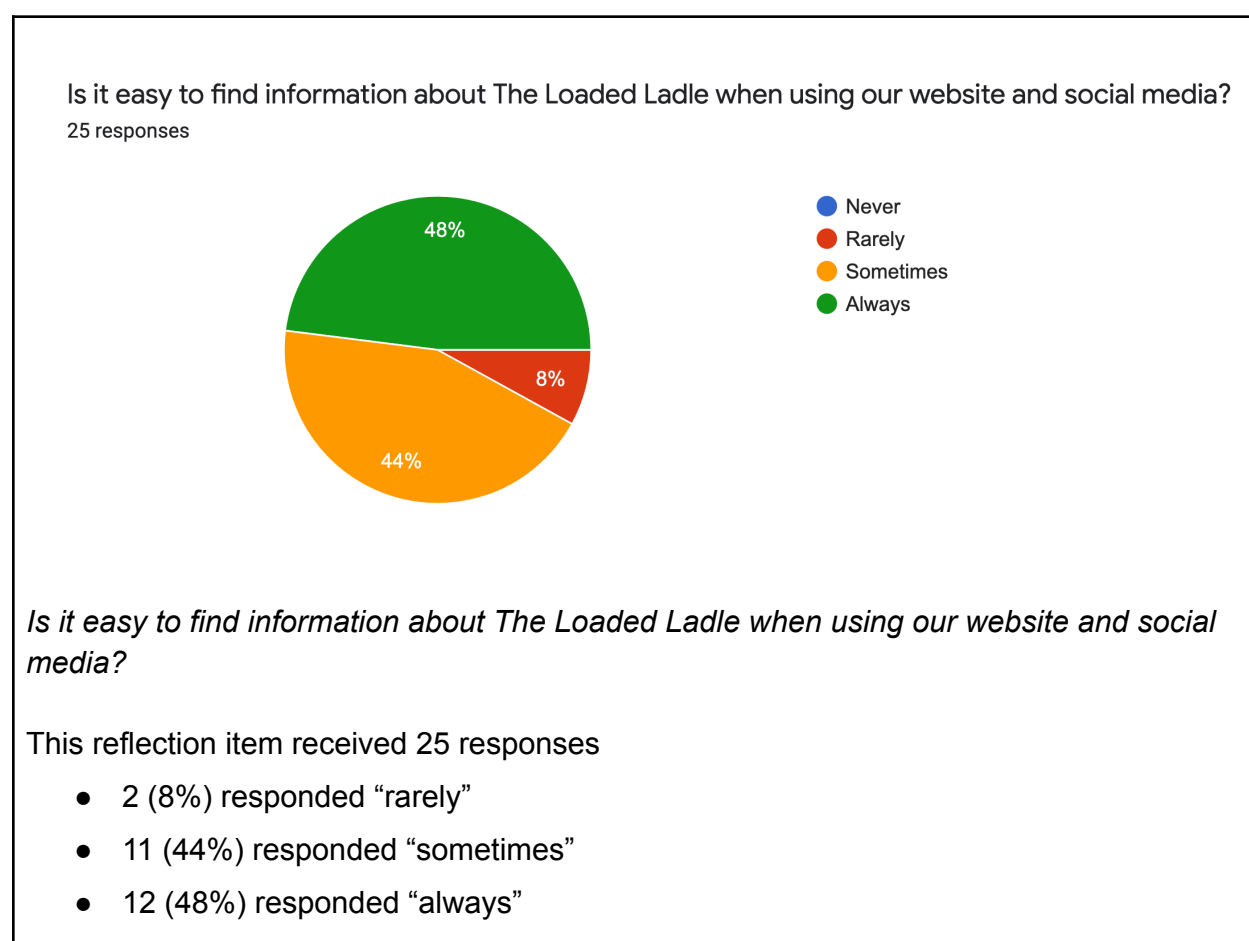
The Ladle should consider the addition of the following information related to servings (and provide this information consistently):

- Determine weekly menus in advance, so that menus can be shared widely in advance of the serving week

- Providing an all inclusive ingredient list for servings, including information about new allergens and potential cross contaminations for that day
- Share this information across social media platforms and at in-person servings using signage at serving counter and sandwich board

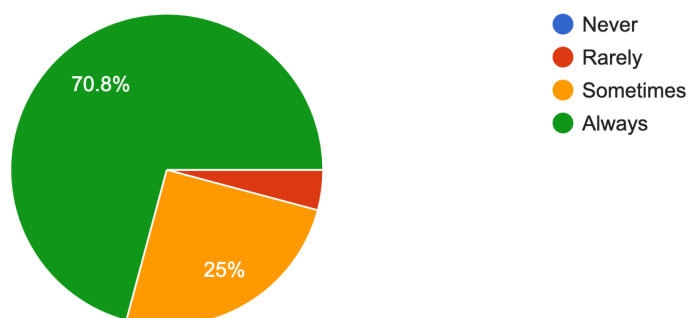
4. Social Media (Instagram & Facebook)

Relevant feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#) is included below –



Is it easy to understand the information provided by The Loaded Ladle on our website and social media?

24 responses



Is it easy to understand information provided by The Loaded Ladle on our website and social media?

This reflection item received 24 responses

- 1 (4.2%) responded “rarely”
- 6 (25%) responded “sometimes”
- 17 (70.8%) responded “always”

Audit Findings –

Findings based on the following audit checklist statements:

A variety of content formats on social media (e.g. images, infographics, video) are used.

Audit Score: Sometimes (1)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to determine what *type* of social media content the Ladle posts and whether or not Ladle posts a variety of different content.

The majority of Ladle social media posts include kitchen-related photos, graphics promoting events/workshops, and some video content.

Recommendations: Based on feedback collected from [The Loaded Ladle's Accessibility Reflection](#), the Ladle would benefit from posting more varied content across all social media platforms, including:

- More photos and/or videos content – some examples include:
 - Kitchen prep (Monday prep party and morning prep) highlights!
 - Meet the Kitchen Team (e.g. staff highlights/introductions)
 - Meet our Volunteers (e.g. volunteer highlights/introduction of frequent volunteers)
- More educational content – some examples include:
 - Community partner highlight (e.g. introduction to community partners, how the Ladle is in collaboration with them, etc.)
 - Ingredient/product-related content (e.g. highlighting commonly used ingredients, providing brief information about how to prepare them, how the Ladle likes to season them, what their nutritional value is, etc.)

Accessible, easy to read and understand language is used on social media.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to identify whether or not the Ladle uses accessible language across all social media posts.

Accessible language accommodates people of all ages and abilities and avoids using complicated, obscure language, or unnecessary “filler” words”. Where more complex concepts or ideas need to be used, accessible language defines these terms. Accessible language also accommodates speakers of English as a foreign language.

Generally, accessible language should:

- Use widely understood words
- Use short words, sentences, and paragraphs
- Include definitions of complex, unfamiliar ideas (if used)
- Avoid obscure or multi-syllable words
- Avoid unnecessary or repetitive language

The Ladle demonstrates an understanding of accessible language. The Ladle’s media content are often short form text-based graphics with short descriptions using plain, simple language, and definitions or “disclaimers” when using unfamiliar language.

The following is an **example** of a post the Ladle shared on Instagram on behalf of an organization called Halifax RISE. In this post, the specific term “newcomers” is used in an image and is further defined/contextualized in the post’s description. This demonstrates the appropriate use of potentially complex language and providing a definition for this language –

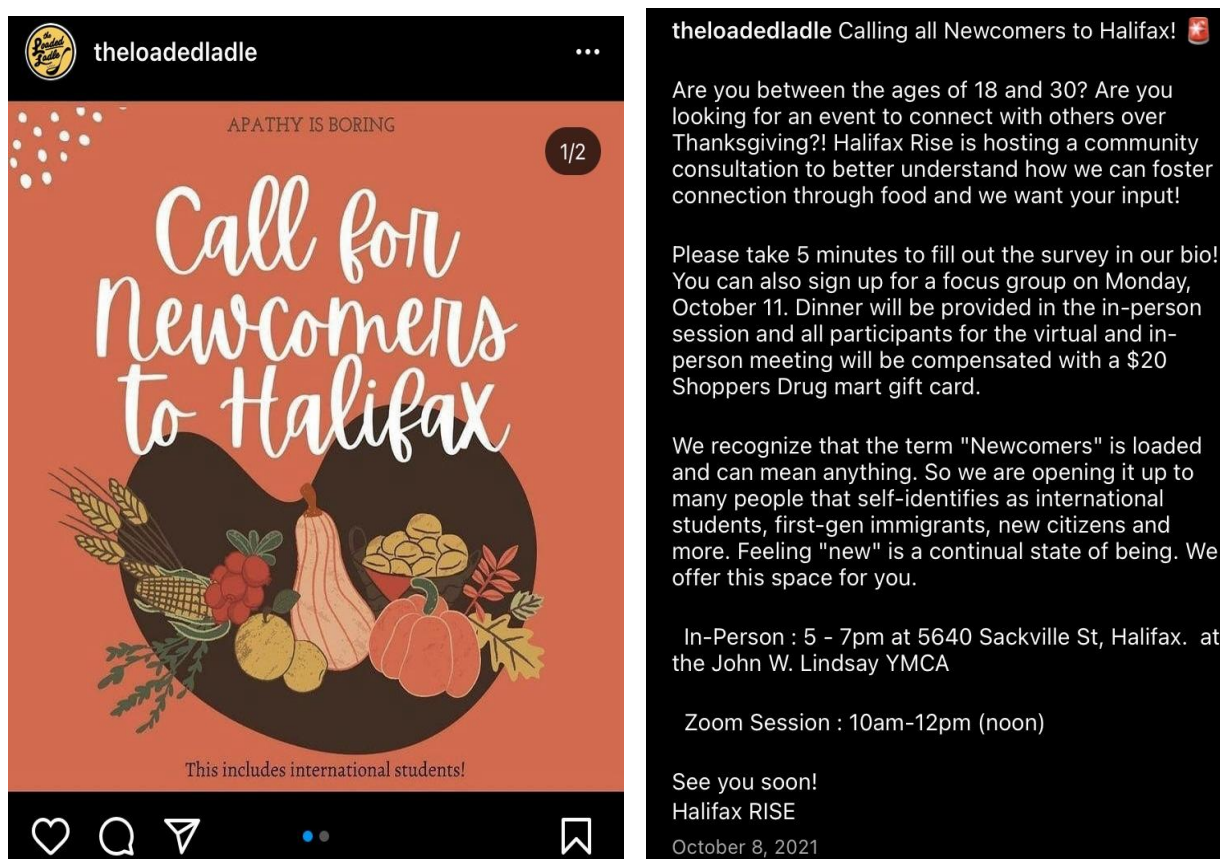


Image on left side of screen: Graphic that contains the text, “Call for Newcomers to Halifax”

Image on right side of screen: A three section text description to the left graphic, which includes a disclaimer that reads, “*We recognize the term ‘Newcomer’ is loaded and can mean anything. So we are opening it up to many people that self-[identify] as international students, first-gen immigrants, new citizens, and more. Feeling ‘new’ is a continual state of being. We offer this space for you.*”

Resources

<https://www.boia.org/blog/ditch-the-fancy-vocabulary-for-accessible-language>

<https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/use-plai>

Recommendations: Consider learning more about accessible language use and continue using language that aligns with the Ladle’s core values, while keeping in mind the guidelines referenced above – specific recommendations include:

- Reviewing old social media posts for word use, length, and overall construction to specifically think about how the Ladle has used accessible language in the past, OR how it hasn’t
- In future postings, format content using lists or shorter text segments to organize information and avoid using larger blocks of text

Resources

<https://accessibility.dl.umn.edu/core-skills/bul>

Accessibility measures, including use of integrated settings, are taken when posting content on Instagram and Facebook.

Audit Score: Most of the time (2)

Detailed Feedback: This checklist item is intended to determine whether or not the Ladle uses integrated accessibility settings, such as alt text, as well as other practices, like providing image descriptions and closed captioning on social media.

The Ladle’s more recent social media activity consistently includes image descriptions. An overview of earlier posts found that alt text and image descriptions have not been included. Earlier video posts do not contain closed captioning – integrated in-app closed captioning options (specifically on Instagram), are not currently extensive though third party captioning services are useful for captioning video content before sharing on social media platforms.

Recommendations:

- Continue use of alt text, image descriptions, and closed captioning in all social media posts, including graphics, photos, and videos.
- Continue staying informed on current social media accessibility practices

- Consider “community testing” as a form of continued social media auditing – the Ladle’s social media likely isn’t completely accessible even with the use of different accessibility tools. As a result, some folks may be excluded from interacting with the Ladle in this way. To address this, the Ladle could benefit from a form of community-centred testing to further determine if:
 - Someone using screen reader software can navigate Ladle social media
 - Someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing can navigate Ladle social media
 - Someone with a cognitive disability can navigate Ladle social media – is access limited by an individual’s memory, attention, reading comprehension, or visual comprehension?

Resources

<https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CDeaf%E2%80%9D%20and%20%E2%80%9Cdeaf%E2%80%9D&text=We%20use%20the%20lowercase%20deaf.ASL>

<https://accessibilitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cognitive-disability-digital-accessibility-guide.pdf> (see Section 2.2 Cognitive disability in the digital media context)

A Note on Website Accessibility

The following is a list of resources that may be helpful when building or reformatting a more accessible website. Despite not being a focus of this audit, the Ladle’s website could likely be made more accessible. The more technical aspects of inclusive website design are beyond my scope, so somebody with this specific expertise may better understand and implement this information. The website could also benefit from a form of community testing.

Resources

<https://accessibility.jhu.edu/electronic-i> (*Accessibility Starter Guide for Website Builders*)

<https://medium.com/walmartglobaltech/the-r> (a really interesting article detailing a specific example of accessible web design and how even the most subtle design changes impact accessibility)

<https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us/a> (brief set of tips on this)

Brief Social Media Access Guide

This is a brief guide, which is most relevant to The Loaded Ladle and its specific social media activity – it is not at all a comprehensive resource. Information may also become out of date as technology changes and social media platforms update.

Image Descriptions

Image descriptions are an umbrella term referring to text-based descriptions used to convey any important information an image or photo contains. There are two ways image descriptions can be used:

1. Alt (Alternative) Text
2. Long Descriptions

Resources

<https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/a-guide-to-image-description/#structure>

Alt (Alternative) Text

Alt text are **invisible, text-based descriptions** of relevant images, which allow information about an image to be included in a website or social media platform. These descriptions are used and read aloud by screen readers, which are tools often used by users who are blind or visually impaired.

Alt text is often included when images depict important information or valuable concepts. However, accessibility experts recommend alt text to be simple and minimalistic. Images used in a more decorative sense, or in a way that depicts “mood, feel, or aesthetic”, do not necessarily require alt-text, yet this decision is ultimately in the Ladle’s.

Resources

<https://accessibility.psu.edu/images/alttext/>

<https://webaim.org/articles/gonewild/#alttext>

Alt Text for Instagram

Alt text descriptions are automatically generated on Instagram using a detection software. However, a user may opt to personalize a post's alt text in the app's Advanced Settings (see below for a brief set of instructions on how to do this).

Creating Alt Text Descriptions on Instagram

- Briefly and specifically describe the most important part of the image
- Use a short phrase or a couple of short sentences
- Where possible, limit your description to 100 to 125 characters (though no definitive rules on alt text length exist)
- Avoid using “This is a photo of...” or “A picture of...” or other filler language like this

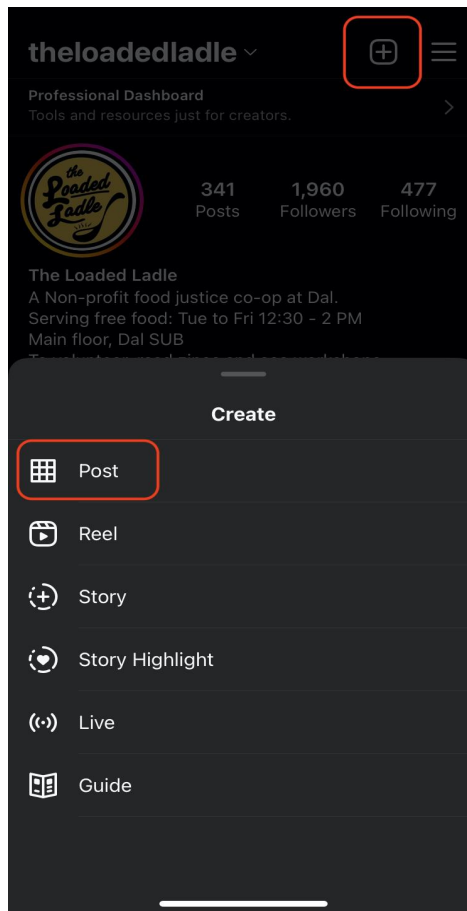
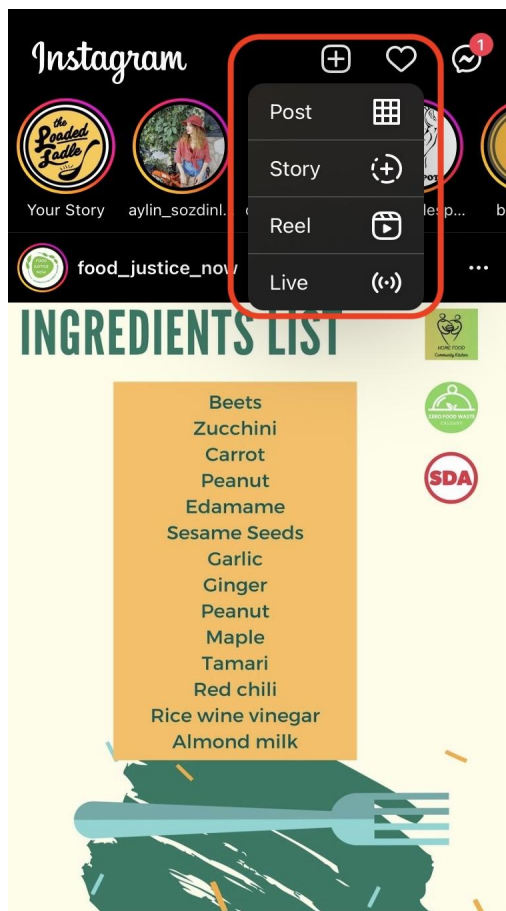
Resources

<https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-alt-text-on-instagram#:~:text=Alt%20text%20on%20Instagram%20is,posts%20to%20visually%20impaired%20users.>

<https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/a-guide-to-image-description/#structure>

How to Add Alt Text When Creating an Instagram post

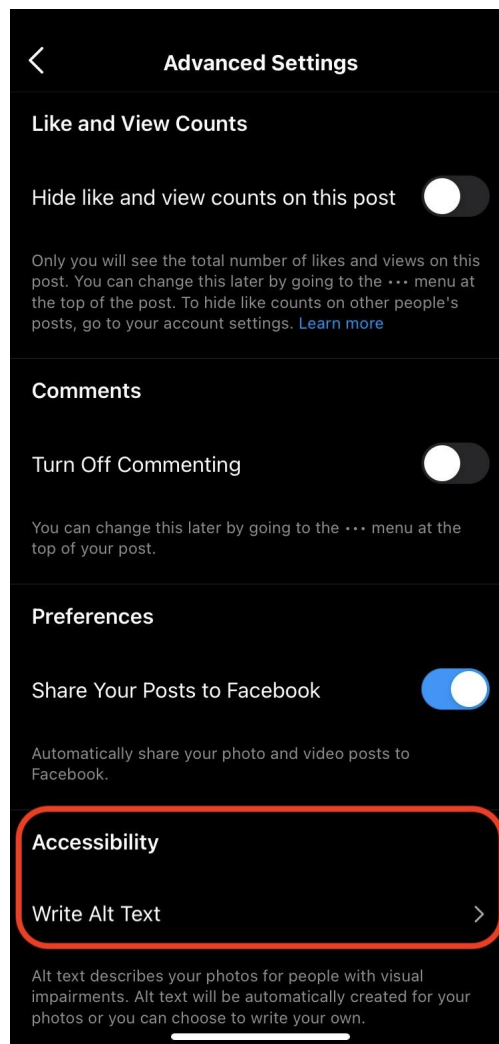
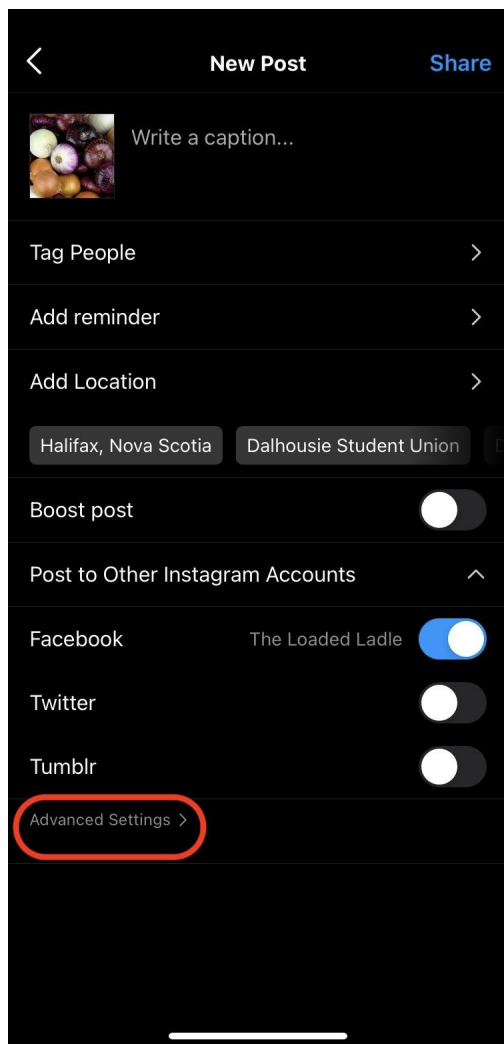
1. On the Instagram app, select the “+” icon at the top right hand corner of the main feed or on The Loaded Ladle’s profile page.
2. Click “Post”.



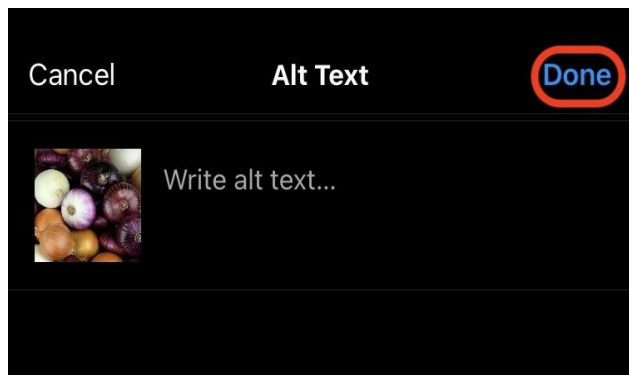
3. Select your content from the photos or videos displayed in the lower half of the page, typically under the “Recents” heading, then click “next”. Select filter of choice or edit if necessary, then click “next”.



4. Write a caption, then click “Advanced Settings” at the bottom of this page.
5. Under the “Accessibility” heading, click “Write Alt Text”.



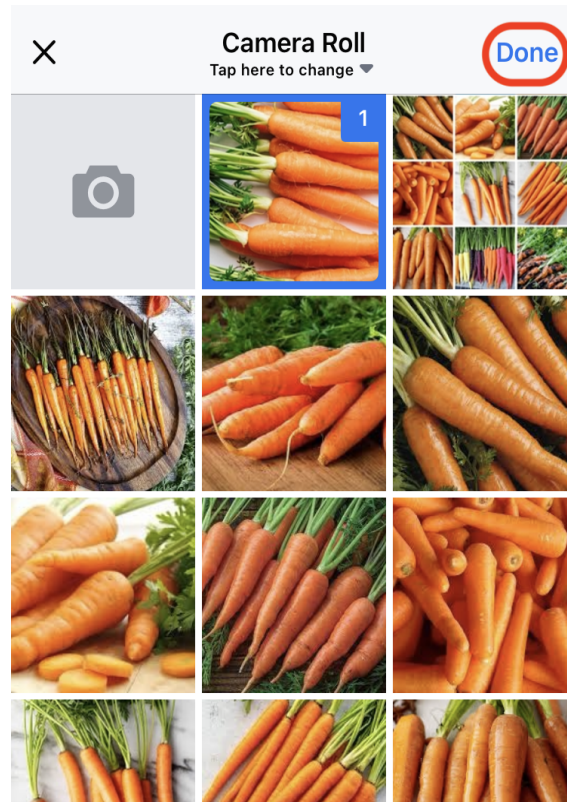
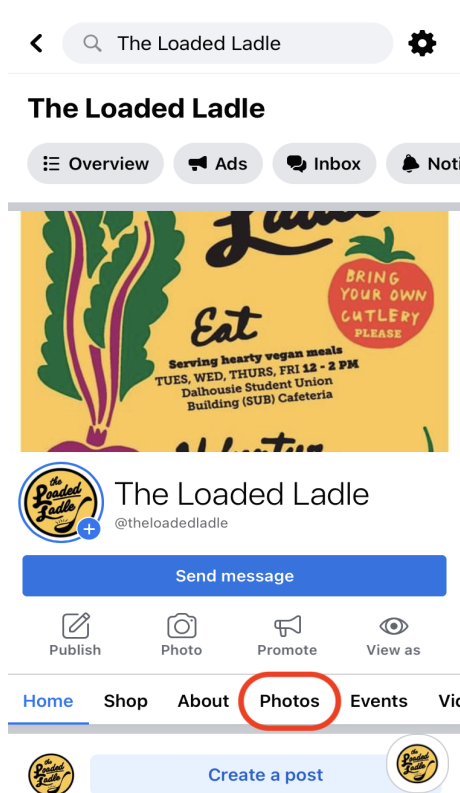
6. Write alt text, click “done”, and complete the post as usual.



How to Add Alt Text on Facebook

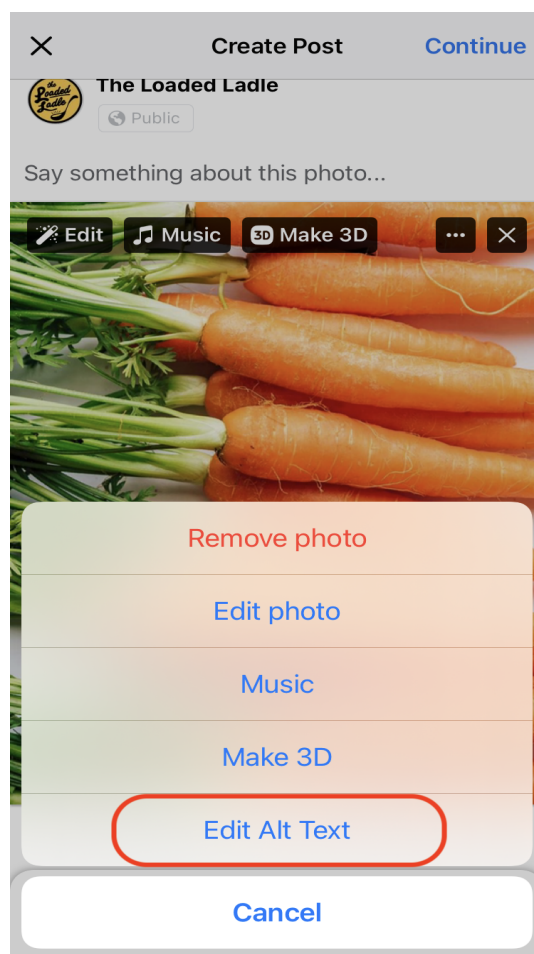
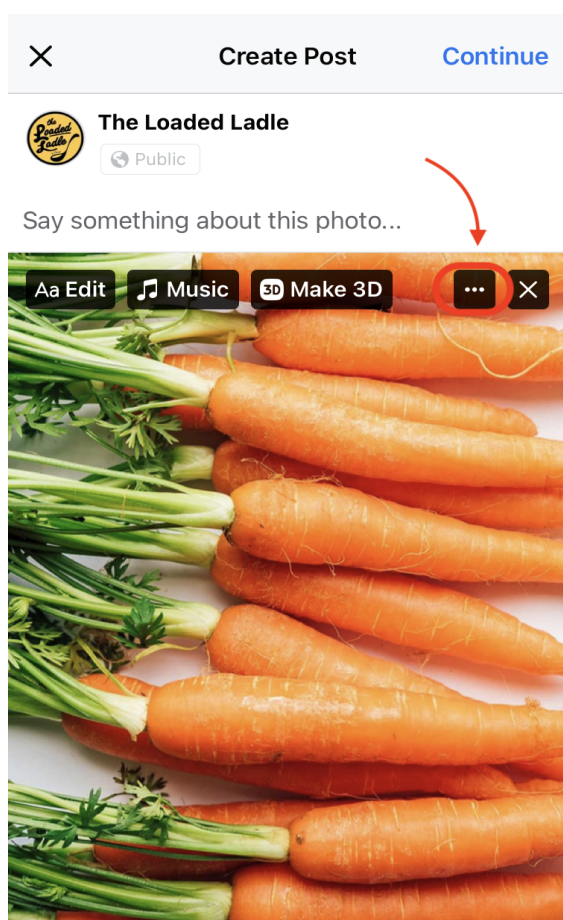
Note: Depending on the device used, slight formatting differences may exist in the process of adding alt text.

1. Go to your News Feed. Click “Photo”, choose your selection, then click “Done”.




2. On a desktop or laptop computer, hover over the photo, click “Edit”, then select “Alternative text”. On a mobile device, click the **three dots** in the upper right hand corner.

3. Facebook may display the automatically generated alt text description. Select “Edit Alt Text” to add or edit.



4. Personalize the photo's description in the bottom text box. Click either "Done" or "Save". Complete post as usual.


✕ **Change Alt Text**



Add alternative text that describes the contents of the photo for people with visual impairments.

Done


✕ **Change Alt Text**



Add alternative text that describes the contents of the photo for people with visual impairments.

Multiple medium sized carrots lay flat on a white background with their leafy tops partially visible.

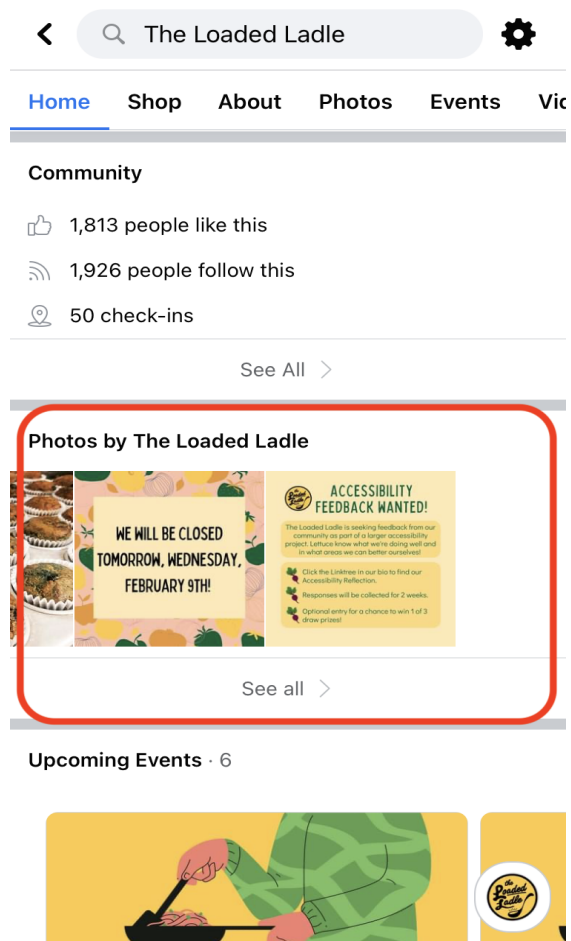
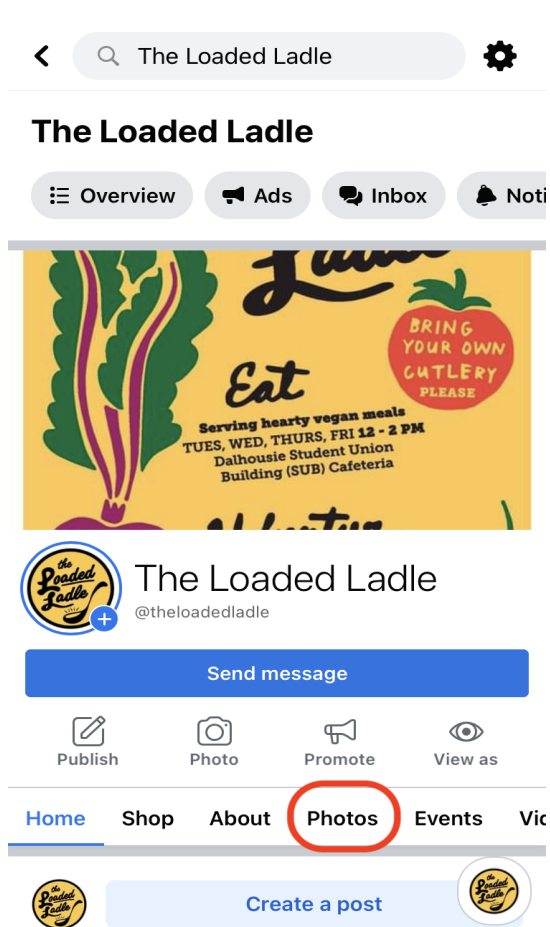
Done

 Alt text is usually less than 100 characters.

How to Edit Alt Text on Facebook (on a photo already posted on page's News Feed)

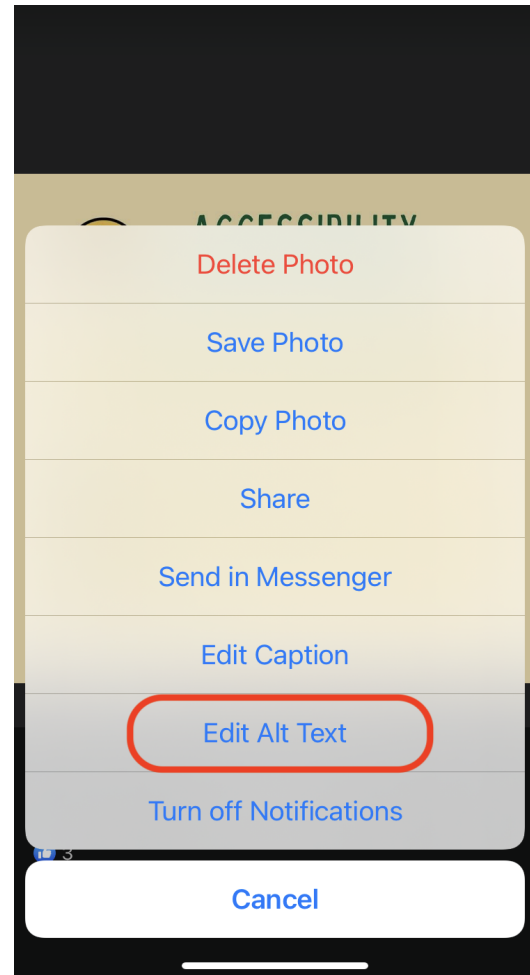
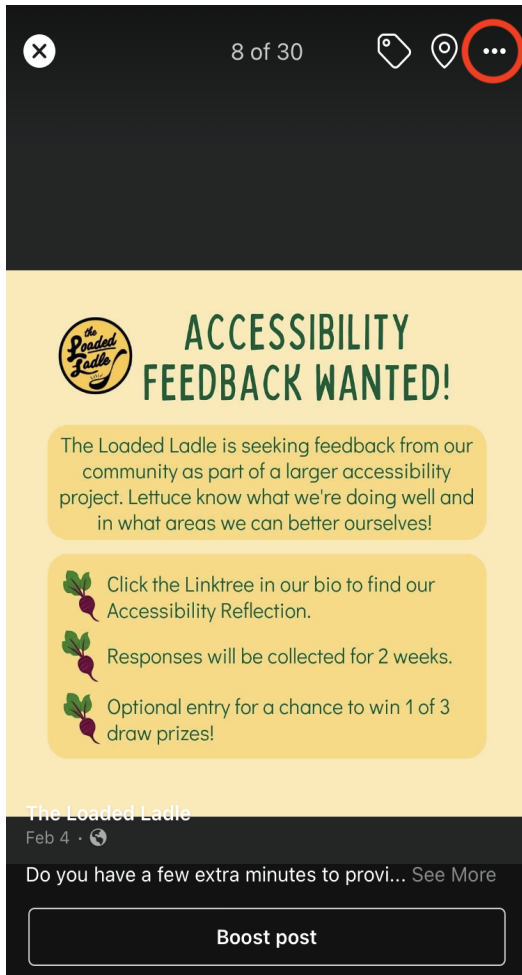
Note: Depending on the device used, slight formatting differences may exist in the process of adding alt text.

1. Go to your News Feed. Click “Photos” closest to the top of The Loaded Ladle’s News Feed or scroll and click “Photos by The Loaded Ladle”.
2. Click “See all” if necessary.



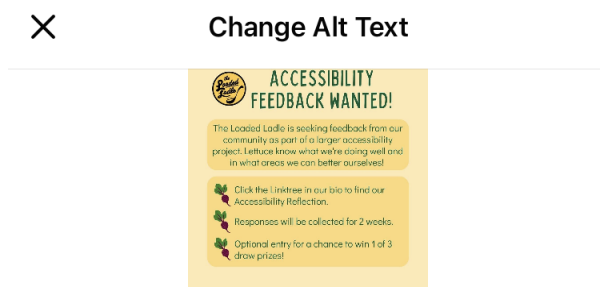
3. Select the photo to edit and click the **three dots** in the top right hand corner.

4. Click “Edit Alt Text”



5. A new “Change Alt Text” box will open. Choose to use the automatically generated alt text or add/edit alt text in the bottom text box.

6. Click “Save” when complete.



The automatically generated alternative text for this photo is:

May be an image of text that says 'ACCESSIBILITY FEEDBACK WANTED! The Loaded Ladle is seeking feedback from our community as part of a larger accessibility project. Lettuce know what we're doing well and in what areas we can better ourselves! Click the Linktree in our bio to find our Accessibility Reflection. Responses will be collected for 2 weeks. Optional entry for a chance to win 1 of 3 draw prizes!'

Add alternative text that describes the contents of the photo for people with visual impairments.

Three sections of text in one graphic. The Loaded Ladle logo in the left uppermost corner with the heading

Save

Long Descriptions

Unlike alt text, long descriptions are not hidden – they are visible, usually found within the caption or in the comments section of an Instagram or Facebook post. Long descriptions generally contain information about:

- Complex images
- Spatial information about images
- Colours
- Emotions
- Written out verbatim text contained in an image
- Placement of text

A UX designer recommends the following descriptive format for long descriptions:

- Describe object – what is the main focus of the image?
- What is the action – usually describes an action. What is the object doing?
- Provide context – what is the surrounding environment?

Two examples of writing a concise, yet detailed description are shown below (from [How to write an image description](#)):

Example 1:



Description: Black Lives Matter sign being held in a crowd.

Object: Black Lives Matter sign

Action: being held

Context: in a crowd

We can add more detail to this description to paint a more vivid picture. In most cases, I recommend adding the detail with the object-action-context format. This makes the description more concise.

A concise way to add detail: A painted Black Lives Matter cardboard sign being held anonymously in a blurred out crowd in front of a stone building.

Example 2:



Description: A tattooed person holding a sign that says, “Teach your children well,” in a crowd of people. In the middle of the sign, there’s an illustration of the earth with 2 raised fists on either side that have a rainbow pride square background, a trans pride circle background, and brown skin tone stripes on the fists.

Object: person

Action: holding a sign

Context: crowd

Resources

<https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/a-guide-to-image-description/#structure>

<https://www.perkinselearning.org/technology/blog/how-write-alt-text-and-image-descriptions-visually-impaired>

<https://uxdesign.cc/how-to-write-an-image-description-2f30d3bf5546> (scroll to “How to write a good image description”)

Captioning

Captions are text transcriptions that appear on a screen and relay messages communicated by video or audio content via a visual medium. They provide access for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or for those experiencing difficulties processing audio information.

Closed vs. Open Captioning

“Closed” captioning can be hidden, or otherwise turned “on” or off. “Open” captioning is always visible and cannot be turned “off”. Using open captioning should be considered when uploading video or audio content to platforms that do not support closed captioning, where automatic captioning services are inaccurate and/or not customizable, or if multiple people will view the content.

Third Party Captioning Services

Most media platforms now provide built-in closed captioning settings. Depending on the quality of these services, captions may not be 100% accurate. If this is the case and built-in captioning is poor quality, consider using third-party captioning services, which

allow you to insert the most accurate captions or provide live-transcription for your content in real-time.

Free Third Party Services

<https://medium.com/voices-through-silence/create-zoom-captions-for-accessibility-8ba1f4ac6ed1> (scroll to *Live Transcription Third Party Services* > see *Google Live Transcribe* or > see *Otter*)

Adding captions to Instagram stories:

<https://later.com/blog/add-captions-to-instagram-stories/> (“Captions” sticker or manually inputting text overlay to match audio)

Adding captions to a video you’re posting on Facebook (auto-generated and editable):

<https://www.facebook.com/help/509746615868430>

<https://animoto.com/blog/business/add-captions-facebook-videos#:~:text=If%20you%20need%20to%20edit,the%20text%20to%20edit%20it> (a how to for enabling auto-generated captions and making customized edits; scroll to *Automatically adding captions to Facebook videos*)

Adding auto-generated captions to Zoom meetings:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/4409683389709>

Resources

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/media/av/captions/>

<https://www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/guides-resources/captioning/>

Pascal Case (or Upper Camel Case)

Pascal case refers to Capitalizing The First Letter Of Each Word In A Hashtag. Using hashtags in Pascal case improve:

- Readability for people with different literacy abilities, people with intellectual disabilities, or people trying to read through text more quickly
- Screen readers’ ability to recognize individual words in a multi-word hashtag
- Overall understanding of hashtags

For example:

#TheLoadedLadle #OnlineCookingClass #ToTheRootWorkshopSeries
#VolunteerCallOut

Resources

<https://bettermarketing.pub/why-your-diversity-and-inclusion-initiative-needs-pascal-cas-e-hashtags-5688c75578da>

<https://www.videotovoice.com/audio-description-matters/camel-case/>