



Guide to RHF Accessibility Certification

v 4.0 (January 2024)

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What is RHFAC?

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) provides building owners and/or operators a holistic, practical and people-focused framework to measure meaningful access, create a roadmap for improvement, and celebrate their commitment to making their spaces accessible for all.

RHFAC is a unique program that:

- **Measures the level of meaningful access of a Site**, based on the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting mobility, vision, hearing and neurological experiences;
- **Provides a roadmap to improve accessibility** through an interactive rating survey that uses common methodology and language to support analysis, reporting and decision making;
- **Publicly recognizes an organization’s commitment** to accessibility through formal certification as ‘RHF Accessibility Certified’ or ‘RHF Accessibility Certified Gold’.



Why Rate & Certify?

1. Demonstrate your leadership in putting people first.

- Include a disability and accessibility perspective to your Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives by creating inclusive spaces for people of all abilities.
- Integrate credible and measurable meaningful access metrics into the “S” of your Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting.
- Showcase your leadership in access and inclusion through labelling, marketing toolkits and other storytelling resources.

2. Gain a competitive advantage by attracting more diverse visitors, staff and customers.

- Leverage the considerable disposable income that people with disabilities, and their family and friends, control – that’s \$538.5 billion in Canada!¹
- Increase business impact. Organizations report accessibility improvements lead to increased user comfort and extended dwell times for all building users, driving a significant boost in retail sales.
- Broaden your talent pool by fostering a work environment where people with disabilities – a dedicated yet vastly underemployed demographic – can contribute to the workplace and staff can perform at their best.



¹ Conference Board of Canada, [The Business Case to Build Physically Accessible Environments](#), February 23, 2018.

3. Futureproof your buildings in a rapidly changing world.

- Remain on the forefront of innovation as RHFAC evolves and integrates emerging technologies, ensuring continuous accessibility of your buildings.
- Be proactive in anticipating legislative changes and increased access demands of an aging population by replacing code minimums with RHFAC's people-centric approach.
- Minimize costly and environmentally wasteful retrofits by incorporating accessibility considerations early into the design stage of new projects. Building to RHFAC Gold increased project cost by only 1%, showcasing the efficiency of proactive and thoughtful planning and design.²

4. Discover the meaningful access of your building(s) and effectively manage accessibility improvements.

- Learn about the accessibility of your building in a low-risk manner – rating results are confidential unless you decide to make them public.
- Collect standardized data on the accessibility of your buildings irrespective of applicable building codes, by using RHFAC's common methodology and language.
- Use the online RHFAC Registry to collect, store, and export data to inform data-driven decision-making on accessibility strategies and investments. Track accessibility improvements across your building portfolio in a measurable and methodical way.

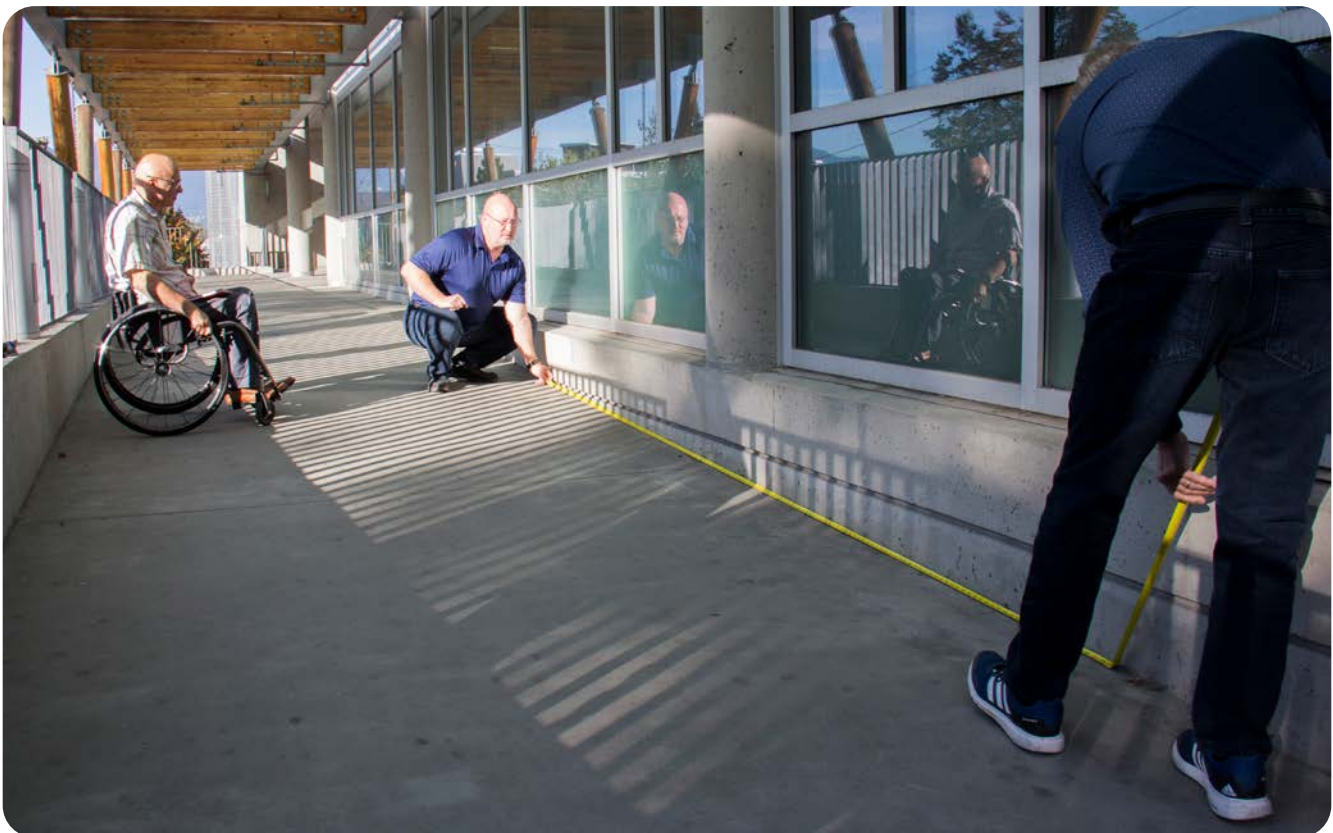
² HCMA Architecture + Design, [RHFAC Cost Comparison Feasibility Study](#), January 2020.

What Type of Sites Can Be Rated?

Public, commercial, and multi-unit residential sites (or their construction drawings, if in the design phase or under construction) can be rated.

- Commercial spaces include but are not limited to retail shops, malls, offices, light industrial sites;
- Public spaces include but are not limited to schools, recreation centers, front-country trails and pathways; and
- Multi-unit residential buildings include but are not limited to condominium dwelling units and shared common areas. Single family homes are not eligible for a rating.

Tenants occupying part of a building may have their leased space rated separately. Major renovations may also be eligible to get rated separately. See **Appendix B: Scope of Ratings** for more detail.



Overview: 6 Steps To Certification

1 Step 1: Create Your Organization Account

Set up your organization account on the RHFAC Registry at <https://Registry.RickHansen.com>.

2 Step 2: Register Your Site(s)

Register the Site(s) that you want to rate and gain access to the interactive RHFAC Rating Survey upon payment of the Registration Fee.

3 Step 3: Hire an RHFAC Professional to Conduct Your Rating

Contract an RHFAC Professional from the [RHFAC Professional Directory](#) to conduct your rating. RHFAC Professionals operate independently and set their own rates.

4 Step 4: Submit Your Rating for Adjudication

When ready to certify, your RHFAC Professional will submit your rating for Adjudication. Adjudication will start after payment of the Adjudication Fee and takes up to 20 business days.

5 Step 5: Receive and Celebrate Your Certification

Get notified by email when your adjudicated results are available on the RHFAC Registry. If your Site is certified, it's time to celebrate this milestone. If not, use your rating to gain insights for improvement.

6 Step 6: Maintain Your Certification

Maintain your site's certification for 10 years by keeping an active annual subscription on the RHFAC Registry and by completing an Annual Questionnaire to confirm no major structural changes.

Detailed Steps: How To Get Rated & Certified

1 Step 1: Create Your Organization Account

If your organization is new on the RHFAC Registry, create an Organization Account on the RHFAC Registry at <https://Registry.RickHansen.com>. This account serves as the central hub for your organization's ratings and users. The user setting it up automatically takes on the role of Organization Manager, but this role can be transferred if needed.

RHFAC's Registry Administrator will review and verify your organization account details. If any issues arise, such as duplicate accounts, expect contact within 1-2 business days.

For detailed steps on how to use the RHFAC Registry, refer to the User Guides and tutorials available on the RHFAC Registry.

2 Step 2: Register Your Site(s)

Register the Site(s) you want to rate and certify, distinguishing between:

- **An Existing Site:** A Site that is built, in use or has an occupancy permit; or
- **A Pre-Construction Site:** A Site that is in design phase or under construction without an occupancy permit.

Access the interactive RHFAC Rating Survey upon payment of the Registration Fee. This tool allows you to view, input preliminary scores and make notes on 500+ ratable built environment features. It provides you with explanations and design tips, a dashboard summary for high-level insights, real-time scoring and collaboration with your RHFAC Professional, and data exporting capabilities for in-depth analysis.

Site registration allows you to lock the Rating Survey version for your Site. Once your Pre-Construction Site is constructed and receives an occupancy permit, it can be rated under the same Rating Survey version as long as that version is still active.

You can also take advantage of our complimentary [Targeting RHFAC toolkit](#) to announce your commitment to accessibility through suggested newsletter and social media copy, images and a templated press release.

3 Step 3: Hire an RHFAC Professional to Conduct Your Rating

To submit a rating for Adjudication and receive certification, you must hire an RHFAC Professional. These individuals, trained in RHFAC methodology, are exclusively authorized to submit ratings for Adjudication.

RHFAC Professionals operate independently and set their own rates. Choose one from the [RHFAC Professional Directory](#), and contact them directly to confirm availability and fees. **It is highly recommended that you engage your RHFAC Professional early.**

Depending on whether your Site is an Existing Site or a Pre-Construction Site, your RHFAC Professional will conduct either an on-site visit or review construction drawings to gather the necessary information to complete the Rating Survey. **See Appendix E: Data Collection for Ratings for more information.**

4 Step 4: Submit Your Rating for Adjudication

Once your RHFAC Professional completes the Rating Survey, they will submit the rating for Adjudication. Expect an email confirming your rating submission and prompting payment of the Adjudication Fee.

An RHFAC Adjudicator will review and approve your rating within 20 business days upon receiving the Adjudication Fee. Your RHFAC Professional should be readily available to answer any queries from the Adjudicator.



5 Step 5: Receive and Celebrate Your Certification

After Adjudication, you will receive an email notification to view your results on the RHFAC Registry. You will be able to view and export the completed Rating Survey and view a Rating Summary highlighting key areas of success and improvement.

If your Site achieved certification – congratulations! A downloadable Letter of Certification will be available on the RHFAC Registry. To celebrate and showcase your achievement:

- **List publicly on the RHFAC Registry:** Your site’s profile, certification level and rating score will be publicly available in the certified sites directory of the RHFAC Registry;
- **Use our Marketing Toolkit:** Download our complimentary [RHFAC Marketing Toolkit](#), featuring digital certification badges and templates for social media posts, newsletters, press releases and more!
- **Order and install the iconic [RHFAC plaque](#) at your Site:** For an additional fee, you can order an RHFAC plaque through our third-party vendor on the RHFAC Registry. Plaques are available in both English and French, and include Braille and raised characters.

Even if your Site did not achieve certification, be proud of taking a step towards meaningful access. Your rating provides valuable insight for improvements as you continue your accessibility journey.

See **Appendix C: Certification Levels and Requirements** for more information on certification requirements.



6 Step 6: Maintain Your Certification

Keep your certification active for up to 10 years* from the anniversary date of your original certification. To maintain your certification, you must:

1. **Maintain an active subscription on the RHFAC Registry:** Effective April 1, 2025, pay an Annual Subscription Fee each year to maintain an active subscription.
2. **Complete an Annual Questionnaire:** On the anniversary of your certification, complete a short questionnaire to confirm:
 - a. No major structural changes and renovations to an Existing Site, or no significant changes to the design of a Pre-Construction Site have taken place; and
 - b. The Site still meets all certification prerequisites in place of the original rating.

Any declared changes will be investigated by an RHFAC Adjudicator. RHFAC reserves the right to withdraw certification at its discretion and/or conduct an audit at the organization's expense.

*Certification for Pre-Construction Sites expires when the building receives an occupancy permit. To certify the newly constructed building, you must undertake a new rating as an Existing Site.



Fees

Fee	Amount (\$CAD)	What's Included?
Registration Fee	\$500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Immediate access to the interactive RHFAC Rating Survey. ✓ Ability to lock the Rating Survey version for your Site. <p>Payable on the RHFAC Registry upon Site registration.</p>
Annual Subscription Fee	\$240	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Year-long access to the interactive RHFAC Rating Survey. ✓ Ability to submit your rating for Adjudication. ✓ Ability to maintain your certification for up to 10 years (conditions apply). <p>Payable on the RHFAC Registry on April 1 of each year (effective April 1, 2025).</p>
RHFAC Professional Fee	Industry Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Services to conduct your on-site visit/ drawing review and submit your rating for Adjudication. <p>Payable directly to your RHFAC Professional based on individual rates and scope of work.</p>

Fee	Amount (\$CAD)	What's Included?
Adjudication Fee	Pre-Construction Site - \$1,250 Existing Site - \$1,850 before June 30, 2024 \$2,500 on July 1, 2024 and after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Validated rating by an independent RHFAC Adjudicator. ✓ Certification so you can publicly list, report and showcase your achievement. <p>Payable on the RHFAC Registry when your RHFAC Professional submits your rating for Adjudication.</p>
Plaques (Optional)	\$741.99 + applicable taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An iconic RHFAC plaque to proudly display at your certified Site. <p>Payable directly to a third-party vendor on the RHFAC Registry.</p>

Thank you,

Thank you for taking a big step towards improving your building's accessibility and to create a world that is inclusive for everyone, everywhere.

Thanks to organizations like yours, people of all abilities can look forward to a more inclusive and accessible future.



Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Adjudication	Adjudication is the review by an RHFAC Adjudicator to ensure the accuracy and reasonableness of the rating information submitted by the RHFAC Professional. Upon this third-party approval, clients receive their rating results and, if eligible, Site certification.
Existing Site	A Site that is built, in use or has an occupancy permit.
Expansion	An existing Site that has added new square footage.
Meaningful Access	Meaningful Access focuses on meeting the genuine accessibility needs of all Site users, regardless of ability. It emphasizes evaluating the overall user experience rather than just physical access features, acknowledging that accessibility is about the entire experience, not just individual components. In other words, when it comes to accessibility, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
On-Site Visit	A visit you schedule with an RHFAC Professional gather information of an existing Site, including taking photos, measurements and notes.
Organization Account	An account that serves as a central hub for an organization’s ratings and users on the RHFAC Registry.
Organization Manager	An RHFAC Registry user with administrative privileges responsible for managing the Organization Account, which includes editing organization details, and inviting and approving colleagues to join the Organization Account.
Pre-Construction Site	A Site that is in design phase or under construction without an occupancy permit.

Rating Score	Total earned points divided by the total available score on the RHFAC Rating Survey, expressed as a percentage.
Rating Summary	The Rating Summary is a report written by the RHFAC Professional that highlights a Site’s key areas of success and improvement based on the results of the RHFAC Rating Survey.
Redevelopment	Significant modifications to the interior structural configuration of a Site.
Registry Administrator	An RHFAC staff member who provides support to RHFAC Registry users.
RHFAC Professional	An individual authorized to conduct RHFAC ratings. RHFAC Professionals must pass the required training and exam, as well as maintain good standing to submit ratings for Adjudication.
RHFAC Professional Directory	An online listing at RHFAC Professional Directory , that enables organizations to find and contact RHFAC Professionals in good standing.
RHFAC Rating Survey	The questionnaire used by RHFAC Professionals to rate 500+ built environment features of a Site, which determine the Rating Score.
RHFAC Registry	The RHFAC Registry (https://Registry.RickHansen.com) is an online platform for managing and submitting Site ratings, adjudicating ratings, and showcasing certified Sites. The RHFAC Registry is an online platform that facilitates the rating and certification process. Specifically, it is used to manage Site ratings, to record rating and certification results, and to showcase Sites that have achieved RHFAC certification levels (if the clients decide to list publicly).

RHF Accessibility Certified	A certification level that applies to an Existing Site that, after adjudication, meets Certification Prerequisites and achieves a Rating Score of at least 60%.
RHF Accessibility Certified Pre-Construction	A certification level that applies to a Pre-Construction Site that, after adjudication, meets Certification Prerequisites and achieves a Rating Score of at least 60%.
RHF Accessibility Certified Gold	A certification level that applies to an Existing Site that, after adjudication, meets Gold Certification Prerequisites and achieves a Rating Score of at least 80%.
RHF Accessibility Certified Gold Pre-Construction	A certification level that applies to a Pre-Construction Site that, after adjudication, meets Gold Certification Prerequisites and achieves a Rating Score of at least 80%.
Scope of Rating	Defines the areas included in an RHFAC rating, which is based on Site information and expected use. Any excluded areas must be justified by the RHFAC Professional.
Site	A public, commercial, or multi-unit residential building including their exterior environments, or trails/pathways. A Site can be categorized as an Existing Site or Pre-Construction Site.
Universal Design	The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Appendix B: Scope of Ratings

The scope of a rating defines the areas included in the RHFAC rating, which is based on Site information and expected use. Any excluded areas must be justified by the RHFAC Professional. Factors such as ownership, tenancy and major renovations may affect the scope of a rating.

Owned Sites

If you are a Site owner, you must identify all of the spaces that you control to be rated. The Site should:

- Include all areas that are accessed by the public and employees; and
- Exclude restricted areas (e.g. boiler room, biohazardous areas, etc.).

Note: Tenanted spaces may be excluded if tenants are responsible and control the space rather than the owner.

Tenanted Sites

If you are a tenant, you must identify your tenanted space and the associated common areas to be rated, including:

- All areas available to the public and employees, within the leased space;
- The closest accessible entrance (may include parking if facilities exist) and the direct route from the entrance to the tenanted space;
- The closest accessible sanitary facilities and the most direct route from the tenanted space, if they are located outside of the tenanted space; and
- The most direct emergency exit route from the tenanted space.

If a tenant occupies the entire Site, all areas will be considered common and therefore must be included in the rating.

Major Renovations

Major renovations to an existing building can be rated separately under RHFAC if it is an expansion or redevelopment. If you are rating a major renovation, all areas and elements expected to be used must be included. This means that the scope of a rating for a major renovation Site may extend beyond the renovated area to include:

- All amenities and facilities expected to be used by users of the renovated Site;
- The closest accessible entrance (may include parking if facilities exist) and the direct route from the entrance to the renovated space;
- Paths of travel leading to the renovated space;
- The closest accessible sanitary facilities and the most direct route from the renovated space, if sanitary facilities for users of renovated space are located outside of space; and
- The most direct emergency exit route from the renovated space.

Note: Site enhancements, such as the addition of a new accessible reception desk and seating in the lobby of an office tower, are not considered a redevelopment for the purposes of receiving a distinct RHFAC rating.











Appendix C: Certification Levels and Requirements

There are two levels of certification: **RHF Accessibility Certified** and **RHF Accessibility Certified Gold**. Certification is based on:

1. Meeting the Certification Prerequisites and Gold Certification Prerequisites; and
2. Achieving a minimum rating score on the Rating Survey.

Pre-Construction Sites follow the same requirements, receiving **RHF Accessibility Certified Pre-Construction** or **RHF Accessibility Certified Gold Pre-Construction**.

Certification Level	Rating Score	Certification Prerequisites	Gold Certification Prerequisites
RHF Accessibility Certified Gold RHF Accessibility Certified Gold Pre-Construction	80%+		
RHF Accessibility Certified Gold	80%+		
RHF Accessibility Certified Gold Pre-Construction	60% - 79%		
Not certified	0 - 100%+		

Certification Prerequisites

To be certified, all Site must have:

- An accessible public entrance; and
- Access to all key functional spaces.

Gold Certification Prerequisites

To be RHF Accessibility Certified Gold, a Site must have:

- Designated accessible parking space(s), if parking is provided for Site users;
- Access to public transit, if the Site is located in an area serviced by transit;
- Accessible path(s) of travel leading to building or trail entrance and throughout the building or trail;
- An accessible primary entrance for public and staff (if separate);
- Access to all floors expected to be used by elevator or lift usable by everyone;
- At least one universal washroom;
- Emergency systems with visual and audible fire alarms in both public and private areas;
- Wayfinding strategies in place to navigate throughout the Site;
- Safety warning features, such as tactile attention indicators at the top of stairs and cane-detectable features, if there are overhead or protruding hazards along the path of travel;
- Tactile markings for permanent room identification signs;
- Assistive listening and communication enhancement technologies, when applicable to the Site;
- Accessibility provision(s) for the key functional facilities of the Site; and
- Accessible or adaptable residential unit(s) for each type of units (e.g., bachelor, 1 bedroom, etc.) available, if it is multi-unit residential building.

Appendix D: RHFAC Rating Survey

The RHFAC Rating Survey is the questionnaire used by RHFAC Professionals to rate 500+ built environment features of a Site, determining the Rating Score. It is developed by a broad scope of shareholders including major organizations of and for people with disabilities; a technical committee of built environment professionals, and an advisory committee of building owners and operators, municipal planners, and large space leaseholders.

The RHFAC Rating Version is updated at least every 5 years to stay current with innovation, legislation and best practices. The rating survey versions to date are:

Version	Launch Date	Site Registration Deadline	Final Adjudication Deadline
v1.0	September 2017	October 2018	August 2019
v2.0	April 2018	September 2020	March 2021
v3.0	May 2020	June 2024	May 2030
v4.0	January 2024	To Be Determined	January 2034

About RHFAC v4.0

The latest version, RHFAC v4.0, includes:

- Inputs from people with disabilities and their representatives, RHFAC Professionals, industry experts and leaders, using a collaborative approach, through representation on the RHFAC Technical Subcommittee and subject matter experts;
- Identification and explanation of features in the built environment that benefit hearing, vision, mobility and neurodivergent communities;
- More accessible and approachable to program users using plain language;
- Integration emerging trends, academic research and technological innovations;
- Build upon new advancements in the accessibility regulatory environment including standards and best practices; and
- An adaptable and flexible framework that can be applied internationally across jurisdictions.



Vehicular Access



Exterior Approach and Entrance



Interior Circulation



Interior Services and Environment



Sanitary Facilities



Wayfinding and Signage



Emergency Systems



Additional Use of Space



Residential Units



Trails and Pathways



Mind-friendly Environments



Technology and Innovation

Appendix E: Data Collection for Ratings

Your RHFAC Professional will collect information on your Site to complete your rating and submit it for adjudication. Data collection varies depending on whether the rating is for an Existing Site or Pre-Construction Site.

Existing Sites: Data Collection Through On-Site Visits

For Existing Site ratings, your RHFAC Professional will conduct an on-site visit to collect data about the Site. The following provides some basic information on what to expect and how to prepare for it.

BEFORE the on-site visit, provide your RHFAC Professional with:

- An on-site contact person who will be available to provide access to the Site, and answer any Site-related questions that arise during and after the on-site visit, if required;
- Any relevant background information about the Site, including information about users and typical use of spaces/facilities, and construction and upgrade history of the Site;
- Copies of Site plans and building plans, if available;
- Any information about security clearance or Site access requirements (e.g., contractor badge, sign in, etc.) to allow access to all areas of the Site included in the scope of rating;
- If you are a tenant, obtain permission from the building owner prior to rating;
- Detailed plans of different residential units and physical access to each floor plan option, if you are strata corporation or multi-unit residential building owner or manager; and
- Trail information, such as length of trail (km), name of trail, surface type of trail (e.g. paved, hard-packed aggregate, gravel), amenities that specifically service the trail and brief justification, plans of the trail indicating start and end points, length, and amenities; and contour map, indicating grade, if a trail.

Note: It is recommended that you inform all staff at the Site beforehand that an RHFAC Professional will be on Site to complete a rating.

Your RHFAC Professional will confirm:

- Details regarding the on-site visit and expected scope of rating; and
- Estimated time to complete the rating (e.g., on-site visit and rating submission on the RHFAC Registry) based on the size and complexity of the Site.

DURING the on-site visit, your RHFAC Professional will:

- Gather information to complete the RHFAC Rating Survey;
- Use simple measuring tools (i.e. measuring tape, light meter, inclinometer, etc.); and
- Take photographs that will be submitted for Adjudication (these photographs will not be made public).

AFTER the on-site visit, your RHFAC Professional will:

- Complete the RHFAC Rating Survey on the RHFAC Registry, using the information collected during the on-site visit;
- Submit the completed rating for Adjudication; and
- If required, address any issues identified by the Adjudicator during the adjudication process.

Pre-Construction Sites: Data Collection Through Drawing Reviews

For Pre-Construction Sites, your RHFAC Professional will review architectural drawings such as Site plans, elevation and section drawings, specifications, schedules, schematic drawings, and material boards.

Your Design team will need to provide your RHFAC Professional with all necessary information. Your RHFAC Professional will complete the RHFAC Rating Survey based on available data for Adjudication, with your attestation for features not finalized.

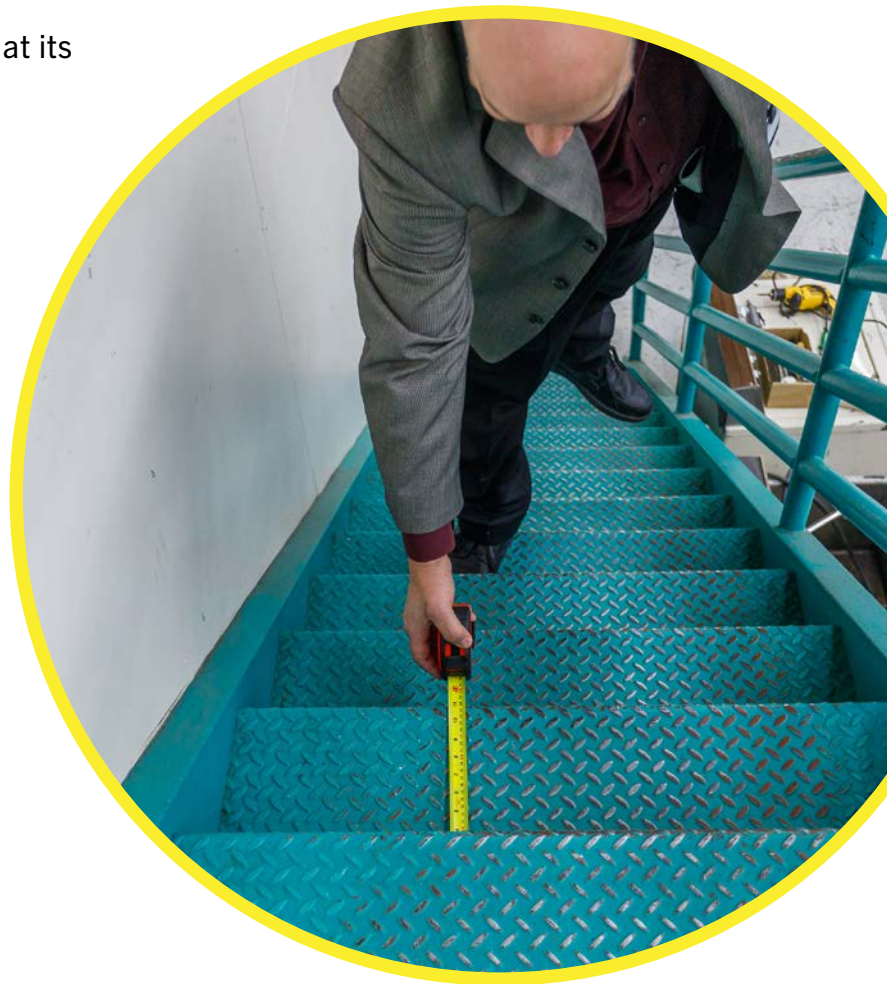
Appendix F: Requesting a Rating Score Review

For inquiries about your final Rating Score, contact your RHFAC Professional first. If issues persist, you or your Professional can request RHFAC to review within three months of adjudication.

To request RHFAC to review your Rating Score, email access@rickhansen.com with your:

- Organization name;
- Site name and address; and
- Exact element(s) or line items in the RHFAC Rating Survey that you would like reviewed with the respective rationale.

RHFAC will provide a final determination at its discretion. All decisions are final.





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