



# Progress report 2024: Employment and Social Development Canada 3-year accessibility plan

**Accessibility is everyone's  
business**

Decembre 3, 2024



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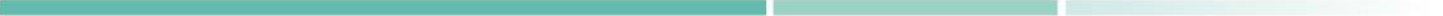
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# 1. Glossary

## Accessibility

The degree to which a product, service, program or environment can be accessed or used by all. (Source: [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#))

## Accommodation

Any change in the working environment that allows a person with functional limitations in their abilities to do their job. Changes can include:

- adjustments to the physical workspace
- adaptations to the equipment or tools
- flexible work hours or job-sharing
- relocation of the workspace within the greater workplace
- the ability to work from home
- reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks for others
- time off for medical appointments

Accommodations (adjustments) can be temporary, periodic or long-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace. (Source: [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#))

## Ableism

Involves discrimination in favour of persons without disabilities. Ableism is linked to socially constructed views of “normalcy” that influence society's understanding of ability and disability. Ableism is also believing that people without disabilities are superior and that being non-disabled is preferable or ideal. Ableism may be intentional or unintentional. It promotes the view that persons with disabilities are less worthy of respect and consideration than persons without disabilities. It also communicates that persons with disabilities are less able to contribute and take part in society, and less valuable. Ableism prevents inclusion and limits opportunities for persons with disabilities. (Source: [A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities](#))

## **Barrier**

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of people with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological, attitudinal or based on information or communications. They can also be the result of a policy or practice. (Source: [Accessible Canada Act](#))

## **Bias**

A preconceived judgment that is held by a person and that influences their perception of or their behaviour towards another person or group of people. (Source: [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#))

## **Common hybrid work model**

Since September 9, 2024, public servants in the core public administration (CPA) who are eligible for a hybrid work arrangement are required to work on-site a minimum of 3 days per week. To ensure leadership and effective support for their teams, executives are now working on-site a minimum of 4 days per week.

The updated Direction reflects the benefits that consistent in-person interactions offer. These include more effective collaboration and onboarding of new talent, as well as creating a strong culture of performance that is consistent with the values and ethics of the public service. (Source: [Common hybrid work model](#))

## **Clients**

People, businesses or their representatives served by, or using services provided by a government department. (Source: [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#))

## **Disability**

A disability is any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. (Source: [Accessible Canada Act](#))

## **Discrimination**

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people that deprives them of or limits their access to opportunities and advantages that are available to other members of society. (Source: [Accessibility strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#))

### **Equity-seeking group**

A group of people who are disadvantaged based on one or more prohibited grounds of discrimination within the meaning of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. (Source: [Public Service Employment Act](#))

### **Inclusive workplace**

An inclusive workplace is fair, equitable, supportive, welcoming, and respectful. It recognizes, values and leverages differences in identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences, and perspectives that support and reinforce Canada's evolving human rights framework. (Source: [Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion](#))

### **Intersectionality**

An analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identity (for example, sex, gender, age, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability) combine to create particular forms of discrimination and privilege. (Source: [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#))

### **Microaggression**

A comment or action that is regarded as subtly expressing prejudice against a person or group of people. (Source: [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#))

### **Neurodiversity**

Refers to how thought patterns and behavioural traits vary in humans. "Neurodivergent" can describe persons on the autism spectrum and anyone who experiences neurologically different patterns of thought or behaviour. "Neurotypical" individuals do not generally have autistic or other atypical neurological thought patterns or behaviours. Workplaces that optimize neurotypical tasks may not meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Neurotypical individuals may assume that their experience of the world is the only one or the only correct one. (Source: [A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities](#))

### **Nothing About Us, Without Us**

Refers to the principles of the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#). It means that persons with disabilities need to be fully and directly involved in decision making and in the design and implementation of policies, progress reports, programs, and services.

### **Self-identification**

Providing employment equity information for statistical purposes. The federal public service uses this information to monitor the progress of employment equity groups and to report on workforce representation. (Source: [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#))

### **Systemic barrier**

A barrier that results from seemingly neutral systems, practices, policies, traditions, or cultures, and that disadvantages certain individuals or groups of people. (Source: [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#))

### **Systematic discrimination**

Discrimination created and maintained by the seemingly neutral practices, policies, procedures and cultures of organizations and government structures. (Source: [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#))

## **2. About this progress report**

### ***Accessible Canada Act***

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA) was passed in 2019 and aims to achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040. Under the ACA, regulated organizations must identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than ICT
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

To do so, they must review their policies, programs, practices, and services. The ACA also requires organizations to publish an accessibility plan every 3 years and develop progress reports in between. These reports must describe the actions the organization has taken to remove and prevent barriers using the accessibility feedback it has received from persons with disabilities.

This progress report applies to 2 regulated organizations:



- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
- Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC)

ESDC administers the Employment Insurance (EI) Program on behalf of the CEIC. This means that the policies, programs, processes, and practices that ESDC uses to carry out its operations also apply to the CEIC.

### 3. Implementing ESDC's 3-Year Accessibility Plan

This is our second progress report since we published the [ESDC 3-Year Accessibility Plan](#) in December 2022. In this report, we provide an update on the progress we have made toward achieving our vision and measuring the impact on the 8 desired results identified in our Plan.

#### Vision

Our vision is to be a leader in public service accessibility.

We will eliminate barriers and maintain the changes required to prevent new ones from arising.

Our employees and clients with disabilities will be able to participate fully and equally in an inclusive, barrier-free environment. Everyone will be able to realize their potential and feel they belong.

#### Desired results

- **Employment:** ESDC recruits and retains employees with disabilities, advances their careers, and provides timely access to workplace accommodations when barriers cannot be eliminated
- **Built environment:** persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to ESDC buildings, offices and facilities
- **Information and Communication Technologies:** existing and new information and communication technologies (ICT) products, services and content are accessible for all users
- **Communication, other than ICT:** ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language
- **Procurement of goods, services and facilities:** accessibility criteria are considered when buying goods, services and facilities, and products include accessibility features where appropriate

- **Design and delivery of programs and services:** in-person, phone and online client services are accessible for persons with disabilities
- **Workplace culture:** everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to make the department barrier-free for persons with disabilities
- **Data, research and analysis:** ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility

## 4. Message from the Deputy Ministers

We are pleased to present ESDC's second progress report on our 3-year accessibility plan. This progress report, which responds to the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act* and regulations, was developed using consultation and feedback from our employees and clients with disabilities.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the branches, regions, teams and the ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network. Their leadership in implementing the plan's activities, identifying, and removing barriers and promoting awareness and the requirement of accessibility and disability inclusion has been invaluable.

We also want to recognize all employees within our department who consistently demonstrate a growth mindset to learning about accessibility and taking action to make ESDC barrier-free.

As we reflect on our journey since the publication of our last progress report in December 2023, we are encouraged by the progress we have made across all 8 priority areas toward realizing our desired results. Here are some highlights.

### Our people

- We hired 2,031 employees with disabilities between April 2020 and July 1, 2024, surpassing our target of 1,187.
- We launched the "Knock on Our Door" campaign to promote confidential resources that help all employees, to help create a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and safe.
- We collaborated with the Employees with Disabilities Network to deliver a series of 38 workshops, events and courses aimed at fostering empathy and understanding of the barriers faced by employees with disabilities.
- We delivered 13 training sessions to managers on Duty to Accommodate and reached over 678 managers and 4 training sessions for employees reaching 384 employees.

- We delivered training to a total of 1,925 learners in just 8 months. 552 learners explored neurodiversity, while 1,235 participants learned more about accessible information technology and documents.
- We created an Accessibility Advisory Group made up of over 70 employees to connect the department with the disability community, discuss barriers, and suggest solutions.

### **Our buildings**

- We completed 100% of our real property accessibility audits to identify areas that need improvements, such as ramps, door operators, and universal washroom availability. This helps us plan upgrades for improved accessibility across all sites.
- We improved client and employee accessibility in the Toronto North York Flagship Service Canada Centre and Passport Services, where accessibility features have been scaled across the network where possible.

### **Our systems and tools**

- We purchased a 3D printer to print replacement parts for adaptive equipment, like keys for special keyboards, to help solve problems faster.
- We taught 1,000 employees to use plain language for clearer documents and web content. We also published a guide on inclusive communication about and with persons with disabilities.
- We are making online applications easier to use for the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) and for Canada Disability Benefit.
- We surveyed 12,069 employees to assess our progress on disability inclusion. The results highlight areas where we need to close the gaps between employees with disabilities and those without in the work environment. These findings will inform our 2025 ESDC Accessibility Plan.
- We are improving our delivery of benefits to make them accessible for both citizens and employees.

Although we have made some progress at ESDC, we acknowledge that significant challenges remain. We continue to work on providing better support for employees with disabilities in our updated onsite work environment and improving our interactions with clients with disabilities. Feedback on these and other issues is crucial as we strive to create a truly inclusive environment.

As we approach the final year of our current plan, we are already looking forward to our next 3-year Accessibility Plan for 2025 to 2028. Our guiding principle will remain “Nothing About Us, Without Us.” We will focus on developing systemic solutions and use different employee equity

perspectives to find, remove and prevent barriers while recognizing the intersectionality within the persons with disabilities communities, ensuring alignment with our plan's 8 desired results.

It is important for us to understand how these intersecting identities shape experiences and that all communities come together to support one another. We will continue to measure progress, make evidence-based decisions, and prioritize accessibility-related data to achieve these outcomes.

We also recognize the need to shift our emphasis from identifying and removing barriers to preventing them altogether. We are dedicated to prioritizing accessibility from the start in all our workplace initiatives, policies, programs, and services. We must adapt our strategies to address barriers as they emerge. A key demonstration of this effort is ESDC's participation in the launch of the Better Accommodation Project as 1 of 9 departmental partners, committed to the implementation of a best-in-class accommodations process.

Accessibility remains everyone's business at ESDC. As Deputy Ministers, we reaffirm our commitment to removing barriers, preventing new ones from arising and taking swift action when new challenges are identified. We will continue to ensure that our approach remains relevant and effective, share our progress openly and act with urgency, ambition and accountability.

Together, we can create a more accessible and inclusive ESDC for all our employees and clients. We are committed to realizing the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act* and our vision, ensuring that we continue to lead in public service accessibility.

Let's keep making progress together to ensure a barrier-free Canada.

### **Cliff Groen**

(He/him/his)

Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development and Chief Operating Officer for Service Canada

### **Sandra Hassan**

(She/her/hers)

Deputy Minister of Labour and Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development

### **Tina Namiesniowski**

(She/her/hers)

Senior Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development and Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities

**John Ostrander**

(He/him/his)

Business Lead, Benefits Delivery Modernization, Employment and Social Development

**Paul Thompson**

(He/him/his)

Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development

## 5. Message from the Employees with Disabilities Network

As the Chair and Co-Chair of the Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), we continue to champion the crucial role that employees with disabilities play in ESDC’s accessibility efforts. Our network stands as a testament to the power of collective voice and shared experiences in driving meaningful change.

We are proud of the strides ESDC has made in the past year toward achieving the goals outlined in the 3-year accessibility plan. The grassroots initiatives led by employees across the department have been particularly inspiring. We have seen increased accessibility training, more inclusive events, and a growing awareness of disability issues at all levels of the organization.

However, we must acknowledge that while we have made progress, many barriers persist, and new challenges continue to emerge in our evolving work environment. As an organization, we need to do better at removing these barriers systematically. The responsibility for advocacy and change should not rest solely on the shoulders of employees and clients with disabilities.

In 2024, we cannot overstate the importance of continuing to have a fully funded and engaged employee network. The EwDN provides more than just a safe space for employees with disabilities and allies; it serves as a crucial link between the lived experiences of our members and the decision-making processes of our department.

As we move forward, we must recognize and address the complex perspectives of identities within our network. Many of us face multiple barriers due to the intersection of disability with other aspects of our identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or age. By acknowledging and embracing this difference, we can ensure that our initiatives are truly inclusive and representative and continue to enhance our application of “Nothing About Us, Without Us”.

We remain thankful for the dedicated leadership that continues to support our network, including our Champion, Darren Deneumoustier, and our ESDC Champion for Employees with

Disabilities, Senior Associate Deputy Minister Tina Namiesniowski. Their commitment to going beyond the legal requirements sets a powerful example for the entire department.

As we reflect on the challenges of 2024 and look toward the opportunities of 2025, we call on all ESDC employees – with and without disabilities – to join us in our mission. Together, we can create a truly accessible and inclusive workplace where everyone can contribute to their full potential.

The journey toward full accessibility is ongoing, but with your support and engagement, we are confident that we can continue to make meaningful progress. Let's work together to build an ESDC where accessibility is not just a goal, but a fundamental part of our organizational culture.

**Sherri Macki**

(She/her/hers)

Chair, Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), Employment and Social Development

**Micheal Chalmers**

(He/him/his)

Co-chair, Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), Employment and Social Development

## 6. General

### Alternate formats

This progress report and our feedback process description are available by request in large print, print, braille, MP3 (audio), e-text and DAISY formats.

#### Online

Submit your request using our [online form](#).

#### Email

[edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca)

#### Telephone

- 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) (toll-free and video relay service)
- 1-800-926-9105 (toll-free teletypewriter)

#### Mail

Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service

Floor 3, Mail Drop 318  
140 Promenade du Portage  
Gatineau QC K1A 0J9

## Feedback process description

As mandated by the [Accessible Canada Act](#), ESDC established feedback mechanisms through which public feedback on accessibility can be received.

### Feedback from the public

Anyone in Canada is encouraged to submit feedback on our progress report through the feedback mechanism process.

### Designated person to receive feedback

The Chief Client Experience Officer is responsible for receiving feedback from the public.

### What feedback can you submit

You can submit feedback on our accessibility plan, progress report, or the barriers you experience when dealing with ESDC. We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of our:

- services
- offices
- call centres
- websites

### How we will use your feedback

We will use your feedback to improve accessibility at ESDC. We may address some feedback right away or use it to develop future accessibility plans or progress reports.

### Confidentiality

Your feedback will not be associated with your name. We will share it only with those employees directly involved in improving accessibility at ESDC.

### How to submit feedback

There are various ways you can submit your feedback. If you want to submit anonymous feedback, please use our online form and leave the contact information section blank.

The accessibility feedback received will be acknowledged in the same manner in which it was received unless it was received anonymously.

## Online

Submit your feedback using our [online form](#)

## Email

[edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca)

## Telephone

- 1-866-506-6806 (toll-free and video relay service)
- 1-800-506-6803 (toll-free teletypewriter)

## Mail

Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service

Floor 3, Mail Drop 318

140 Promenade du Portage

Gatineau QC K1A 0J9

## Feedback from employees of ESDC

As mandated by the [Accessible Canada Act](#), ESDC established feedback mechanisms through which employee feedback on accessibility can be received.

### Designated person to receive feedback

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Services Branch, is responsible for receiving feedback from employees of ESDC.

### What feedback can you submit

As employees, you can submit feedback on our accessibility plan, progress report, or any issue related to accessibility at ESDC.

### How to submit feedback

Employees can contact the ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) using the email address or online feedback form available on the ESDC/SC Intranet site, under the Human Resources Services Branch tab.

## Accessibility statement

ESDC is committed to promoting best practices in accessibility in all our policies, programs, services, and workplaces. Accessibility is a fundamental part of the client and employee experience. We are following the CAN/ASC EN 301 549 2024 standard, which includes



WCAG 2.1 AA, and we are moving toward implementing WCAG 2.2 AA to ensure a more accessible ESDC.

We know it is important to produce information that is accessible to everyone. If you have any difficulties accessing this content, please send us your [feedback](#).

## 8. Feedback

In this section, we provide a summary of the feedback we received through our [accessibility feedback processes](#) from July 2023 to June 2024. Our department has 2 feedback mechanisms in place:

- one for the public on our [website](#), and
- a separate one for employees on our intranet

We organized the 215 pieces of feedback we received this year based on the 8 [priority areas](#) in our accessibility plan. This marks a significant increase from last year’s 76 pieces of feedback (December 2022 to July 2023). Each item was categorized by barrier type, with some receiving up to 3 tags, leading to a total of 305 tags. All feedback was submitted through email or online forms by the following groups:

- employees: 77%
- ESDC clients: 8.5%
- representatives of an organization: 9%
- members of the public: 5%
- other: 0.5%

### Feedback by priority area

**Table 1: Feedback by priority area**

ESDC Accessibility Plan priority areas	Feedback tags by barrier-type
1. Employment	105
2. Built environment	34
3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)	41
4. Communication, other than ICT	19

5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities	9
6. Design and delivery of programs and services	42
7. Workplace culture	44
8. Data, research and analysis	6
Other	5
<b>Total feedback tags</b>	<b>305</b>

### Feedback themes

**Common hybrid work model:** in the Built Environment priority area, 32% of feedback focused on the hybrid work model and 29% on physical office space, with feedback on the hybrid model more than doubling from last year. Employees with invisible disabilities, such as ADHD or neurodiversity, found the new open-concept office spaces too distracting, which made it hard for them to focus. Many felt that returning to the office complicated their accommodation needs, leading to stress from overbooked workstations and worries about meeting their ergonomic requirements.

**Workplace accommodations:** in the Employment priority area, 64% of feedback was about accommodations, up from 28% last year. Many employees expressed frustration with long wait times for accommodations and felt stressed by the Duty to Accommodate process. Some mentioned that medical notes from specialists were sometimes insufficient for obtaining approval. Others were reluctant to share information about their disabilities with their managers or coworkers, fearing it could impact their job performance or career advancement. Additionally, employees felt that managers often lacked the training needed to support those with disabilities.

**Accessible services for clients with disabilities:** in the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services priority area, 26% of feedback revealed that clients with disabilities struggled to access services in person, by phone, or online. Some requested more accessible application forms and better alternatives to teletypewriter (TTY) services. Others reported feeling humiliated when denied service for having a service dog. Additionally, some employees noted that staff often lacked the proper training to support clients with disabilities.

**Support for managers:** Employees said that managers need more support and training on the Duty to Accommodate, ableism, microaggressions, barriers, and unconscious bias to meet the needs of employees with disabilities.

**Creating accessible content:** in the Communications and Other ICT priority area, 63% of feedback was about making content more inclusive and accessible. Employees suggested using larger font sizes, clearer colours, infographics, contrast captions, and plain language.

**Building an inclusive workplace culture:** in the workplace culture priority area, 29.5% of employees emphasized the need to improve workplace culture by removing barriers and acknowledging that not all disabilities are visible. Some employees felt unheard or dismissed when voicing their accommodation needs, which negatively impacted their mental health. There were also calls for greater awareness of ableism in the workplace.

**Building accessible ICT:** in information and communication technologies, 80.5% of the feedback centered on creating accessible content. Employees requested assistance in making SharePoint and Intranet sites accessible, as well as using accessibility features in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and infographics.

## Implementing feedback

The EAO works with the Office for Client Satisfaction and the Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service to address feedback by:

- helping the employee or client by offering guidance, tools, or referrals to experts inside or outside the department
- working with the client to gather more information
- sending the feedback to the correct department (like EI, Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security, Passport, Canada Student Financial Assistance Program) so they can address the issue
- logging the barrier in our tracking tool and use the feedback to shape future accessibility plans
- including the feedback in our reports and inform senior management about any systemic or recurring issues

We are receiving more feedback on accessibility than ever before. However, given the size of our department and the number of employees and clients we serve, we believe there's still room for more input.

To better manage the growing volume of feedback, ESDC has developed a draft Accessibility Feedback Management Framework that will be implemented in January 2025 (consult Appendix C for more information). This framework will guide the 2025 ESDC Accessibility Plan and help us organize and act on the feedback we receive more effectively by focusing on the following:

- collect feedback on accessibility barriers
- organize feedback by priority area
- analyze feedback for actionable insights
- prioritize actions, set targets, and monitor progress
- implement actions to address the feedback
- communicate and report actions to prevent future barriers and close the loop with the person who provided feedback

We are also collaborating with other government departments to learn from their experiences in managing feedback. We will continue to work closely with partners across our department to use this feedback to remove and prevent barriers while exploring new ideas to improve accessibility.

## 9. Consultations

In this section, we share the results of our 2024 consultations and how the findings helped us track our progress in improving accessibility. By consulting with persons with disabilities, we gained valuable insights into how we are doing on removing barriers. These consultations also helped us identify and prevent new barriers from forming, ensuring our department is on track to becoming barrier-free.

### Consulting our employees

ESDC gathered feedback from employees to understand their perspectives on the progress of our accessibility plan since its launch in December 2022. We aimed to learn what is supporting or hindering our efforts. From their input, we identified key themes, ongoing and new barriers, and areas needing improvement. In consulting with our employees, we used various data sources, including:

- **the 2024 building a barrier-free workplace department-wide survey: 12,069** ESDC employees participated, a 30.88% response rate, 3,676 identified as having a disability
- **the survey to the Employees with Disabilities Network on accessibility progress at ESDC: 164** participants
- **consultation with the Employees with Disabilities Network executive committee: 15** participants
- **consultation with the Employees with Disabilities Network at the June 2024 network national call: 141** participants

## We hear you

### Overall perception of progress

When we consulted our ESDC employees, we discovered a notable difference in how employees with disabilities experience the workplace compared to those without disabilities. Among those aware of our accessibility initiatives, opinions were mixed.

### Building a barrier-free workplace corporate survey 2024

The 2024 Building a Barrier-Free Workplace survey was designed to help us better understand our employee experiences to improve accessibility at ESDC. We also wanted to gather data to track our progress, learn how barriers impact employees' job satisfaction and career growth, and use this data to shape our 2025 Accessibility Plan.

By measuring progress on our efforts to remove and prevent barriers in the workplace and collecting insights on employee experiences, we aim to create a more inclusive environment for everyone. The findings will also help us take an intersectional approach in our 2025 Accessibility Plan and expand the scope of accessibility-related data at ESDC.

A total of 12,069 employees completed the survey over a 30-day period, resulting in a response rate of 30.9%. However, 1,307 employees chose not to answer the survey questions, highlighting the importance of addressing privacy concerns in future surveys.

The survey included 19 opinion questions, along with 8 additional socio-demographic questions (please consult Appendix A). Notably, 34% of respondents indicated that they identified as a person with a disability. Among those who identified as having a disability, the following types were reported:

- mental health (53.7%)
- chronic pain (37.6%)
- learning/cognitive (32.3%)
- hearing (10.7%)
- mobility (14.6%)
- seeing (8.1%)
- sensory (33.8%)

### Overall results

The department-wide survey uncovered several key themes and clear gaps between respondents who identify as persons with disabilities and those without disabilities in areas such as engagement, accessibility, and feeling equipped.

**Work environment:** the survey asked all respondents about their experiences in various aspects of the work environment and revealed the following findings.

- 71% of persons with disabilities feel a sense of satisfaction from their work compared to 80% of those without disabilities, showing a gap of 9 percentage points
- 34% of persons with disabilities consider their onsite work environment accessible, significantly lower than the 65% of respondents without disabilities, showing a gap of 31 percentage points
- 69% of persons with disabilities feel comfortable discussing accessibility needs with immediate supervisors, compared to 86% of those without disabilities, showing a gap of 17 percentage points
- 71% of persons with disabilities feel they have the necessary tools and technology to do their job, compared to 84% of those without disabilities, showing a gap of 13 percentage points

**Retention and mobility:** the survey findings suggest that the retention of persons with disabilities could become a concern. The results show that respondents with disabilities were more likely to intend to leave their current job within the next 12 months compared to those without disabilities (18% versus 13%, a gap of 5 percentage points). Among those planning to leave.

- Respondents with disabilities were less likely than those without disabilities to cite retirement as a reason for leaving (5% versus 11%, a gap of 6 percentage points)
- Respondents with disabilities were less inclined than respondents without disabilities to indicate that they intend to pursue another job in ESDC (31% versus 37%, a gap of 6 percentage points)
- Respondents with disabilities were more likely to intend to pursue a position in another department or agency than were those without disabilities (38% versus 33%, a gap of 5 percentage points)
- Respondents with disabilities had a greater tendency than those without disabilities to indicate that they intend to seek a job outside the federal public service (13% versus 8%, a gap of 5 percentage points)

**Self-identification and disability awareness:** the survey asked respondents with disabilities about their self-identification and the reasons for choosing not to self-identify, revealing the following insights.

- **Self-identification:** only 42% of respondents who indicated they have a disability have self-identified in the ESDC PeopleSoft database

- **Reasons for not self-identifying (among persons with disabilities who had not self-identified):**

- 59% expressed that the primary reason for not self-identifying is the fear that it would negatively impact their career
- 16% noted privacy concerns regarding personal information
- 25% reported a lack of knowledge on how and where to self-identify

All respondents were asked about their familiarity with persons with disabilities.

- **Disability awareness and caregiving:**

- 24% indicated that they care for someone with a disability
- 64% have a family member or close friend with a disability
- 42% know someone with a disability in their work unit
- 69% know someone else with a disability

**Barriers in the work environment:** respondents with disabilities were much more likely than those without disabilities to indicate that the following factors impact the quality of their work to a large extent or very large extent.

- Limited opportunities for training and career advancement (34% versus 20%, a gap of 14 percentage points)
- Harassment, discrimination, or microaggressions (14% versus 5%, a gap of 9 percentage points)
- The process for requesting workplace accommodations is confusing or delayed (51% versus 21%, a gap of 30 percentage points)
- Accessibility issues with software, online tools, and phone systems (14% versus 9%, a gap of 5 percentage points)
- Internal documents and web content not being fully accessible (12% versus 6%, a gap of 6 percentage points)
- Difficulty finding information, tools, and resources (25% versus 13%, a gap of 12 percentage points)
- Learning and training accessibility issues (17% versus 9%, a gap of 8 percentage points)
- Finally, a lack of awareness and empathy for the lived experiences of persons with disabilities (33% versus 5%, a gap of 28 percentage points)

These results highlight where we need to minimize barriers to reduce the gaps between employees with disabilities and those without. It is quite possible that the number of employees with disabilities at ESDC is higher in reality than the numbers from self-identification data. This assumption is consistent with the larger proportion respondents who identified as a person with a disability in the survey in comparison to our available workforce data.

To foster a more inclusive workplace, ESDC will introduce key performance indicators in the 2025 Accessibility Plan to ensure that employees who self-identify as having a disability are given opportunities for career development and are progressing in their careers at similar rates as those without disabilities.

### **Intersectionality and intersecting identities**

Collecting data on intersecting identities is important for understanding the complex experiences of employees with disabilities in our organization. To that end, we added questions to our corporate survey to gather and study intersectionality. Intersecting identities among equity-deserving group may present with different challenges.

With a more granular examination of the survey data by these intersecting groups, it will help us better grasp how different parts of a person's identity can overlap and interact, creating unique barriers. This allows us to understand how different kinds of discrimination, or challenges can combine, making things more difficult for some people.

The information from this analysis will help shape our consultation plan for the 2025 Accessibility Plan. It will also help us create better strategies to identify, remove and prevent barriers, ensuring that our efforts reach more employees from different equity-deserving groups.

By using an intersectional approach in our next accessibility plan, we can make policies and practices that are more inclusive and equitable, reflecting the diverse experiences of our workforce.

### **Employees with Disabilities Network consultations and survey**

The ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN) was consulted for this progress report in 3 different formats:

- a virtual session open to the entire network at the Network's National call in June 2024
- another virtual session with the outgoing and incoming Network Executive Committee
- a survey open only to EwDN members, which ran from July to August 2024 and received 164 responses (please consult Appendix A for more information on the questions and survey results)

These sessions were designed to ensure safe spaces and encourage open communication and conversation. During both virtual sessions, employees were asked about the following:



- how they felt about the progress ESDC was making in 3 key areas: accommodations, accessible technology and systems, and workplace culture
- ongoing or new barriers that they were facing
- one thing that ESDC could do right away to improve the experiences of employees with disabilities to remove and prevent barriers

### Ongoing barriers

While participants acknowledged that progress to varying degrees is evident across all priority areas in the plan, there are common themes and persistent barriers that emerged from both consultations:

- **accommodations process:** the process for obtaining accommodations is seen as complicated, time-consuming, and stressful. Employees mentioned long wait times, lots of paperwork, and inconsistent handling of requests by different managers or branches
- **lack of understanding about disabilities:** there's still a lack of awareness, especially about invisible disabilities, and neurodivergence. This can lead to misunderstandings, discrimination, and difficulty in getting the right accommodations
- **inaccessible technology:** some systems and applications are hard to use for employees with disabilities, which makes it harder for them to do their jobs effectively
- **limited career advancement:** there are barriers like job posting requirements and training programs that are not accessible, leaving some employees feeling stuck in their current roles
- **inconsistent management styles:** the way managers handle accommodations varies widely, leading to inconsistent employee experiences that depend on the individual manager instead of a consistent approach across the organization
- **need for accessibility from the start:** it's important to design systems with accessibility from the start, so we avoid problems instead of fixing them later
- **workplace culture:** issues such as discrimination, judgmental attitudes, and inadequate support for employees with disabilities still persist within the organization

### New barriers: 2023 to 2024

Many of the barriers shared were also noted in the 2023 progress report, but the 2024 consultations revealed new barriers that have emerged or become more pronounced:

- **common hybrid work model:** the new requirement for employees to work onsite 3 days a week, and executives 4 days a week, starting in September 2024, has raised major concerns among employees with disabilities about how it will impact their work

and the need for additional accommodations. They also felt there was not enough consultation about the change

- **privacy concerns:** as more employees request accommodations, there are growing concerns about how their personal information is handled and whether it's kept private. Some employees are also frustrated with having to share their information repeatedly
- **caregiver support:** more employees, both with and without disabilities, have significant caregiver responsibilities. Current policies and systems make it hard to balance their work and caregiving duties
- **financial strain:** persons with disabilities are facing increased costs related to managing their disabilities, including medical expenses, due to workplace policies. The frequent need for doctors' notes to support accommodation requests is both emotionally and financially challenging. Additionally, many employees are worried about not having enough sick leave
- **support for self-advocacy:** there is a growing demand for more training, tools, and resources to help employees advocate for themselves and understand their rights at work

### Key challenges

In the consultations and survey, EwDN members highlighted both challenges and successes in improving accessibility at ESDC:

- **positive impact of employee networks:** the EwDN was often mentioned as a crucial resource and a safe space for employees with disabilities to share ideas and challenges. This shows the need to keep these networks well supported and funded
- **work by accessibility teams:** employees with disabilities highlighted the significant role of dedicated teams. They cited the ESDC Accessibility Office, the Ombuds Office, the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential, and the IT Accessibility Office (ITAO) as positive examples of this support
- **telework opportunities and flexible work environments:** the most frequently mentioned and positive feedback was about how teleworking benefits employees with disabilities. Many employees said that having the option to work from home and having flexible work setups removes workplace barriers, helps them work better and feel more included in the organization

This year's EwDN consultations and survey shows the need for better awareness of the accessibility plan and more consistent progress across key priority areas. This underscores the importance of ongoing engagement to address the challenges faced by employees with

disabilities. It also emphasizes that improving accessibility is a shared responsibility within ESDC.

## Consulting our clients

Service Canada is part of ESDC and provides Canadians with information, programs, and services in person, by phone, and online. We are working with clients with disabilities, as well as our partners and front-line staff, to remove and prevent barriers in our programs and services.

Below, we share what we learned from our clients about the accessibility of our programs and services. Our goal was to identify the main concerns and barriers faced by clients with disabilities to guide improvements (please consult Appendix B for more information).

We used several data sources to assess the accessibility of our programs and services:

- [Service Canada client experience survey \(CX\) 2022 to 2023](#): 1,012 respondents to the survey identified as having a disability compared to 935 respondents in 2021 to 2022
- Service Canada's Annual CX Survey for 2022 to 2023 qualitative research: 34 participants who identified as having a disability were chosen from the survey respondents who either reported lower satisfaction with their service experience or encountered barriers to access
- video remote interpretation exit surveys: 304 respondents
- Service Canada Accessible Wayfinding Project: 64 participants
- Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) web content review: 11 participants
- Canadian Dental Care Plan Usability Testing with Persons with Disability: 15 participants

## We hear you

### Overall perception of progress

Our latest [Service Canada client experience survey \(CX\) 2022 to 2023](#) shows that overall satisfaction among clients with disabilities remained stable in 2023, with a slight increase from 69% in 2022 to 71%. This rise in satisfaction was similar to that of all clients.

While satisfaction with online and phone services has improved for clients with disabilities, they still reported lower satisfaction with in-person services, online services, and specialized call centres compared to all clients. Both clients with disabilities and the general client base expressed increased satisfaction with the 1-800-O-Canada phone service channel.

However, there are still significant gaps in service experiences between clients with disabilities and the general population. Clients with disabilities found it more challenging to:

- gather the necessary information to apply
- locate program information
- determine eligibility for programs
- understand the steps to apply
- know what information to provide when applying
- feel confident that issues or problems would be easily resolved

While applying for benefits has become easier for clients with disabilities compared to last year, they still face more challenges than the general population, particularly when applying for Canada Pension Plan Disability and Employment Insurance benefits.

### Areas where progress has been made

- **Front-Line Staff:** many people felt that the staff at Service Canada were respectful and helpful
- **Video Remote Interpretation (VRI):** VRI services have been highly successful, with 83.22% of clients giving a perfect 5-star rating and an average rating of 4.7 stars. VRI has become essential for breaking down language barriers and improving communication, marking a significant improvement over the previous system where clients had to rely on family or paid interpreters.
- **Accessible wayfinding:** Service Canada partnered with an accessibility provider to improve wayfinding using Bluetooth Smart beacons. After addressing issues with the beacons, all were replaced by summer 2023, followed by Lived Experience testing at each site as installations were completed in different regions:
  - Atlantic region: 6 of 6 sites tested
  - Ontario region: 20 of 20 sites tested
  - Quebec region: 9 of 14 sites tested
  - Western region: 17 of 17 sites tested

### Tester Feedback and Recommendations

- **Tester profile:** most testers used iPhones were familiar with BlindSquare, and regularly relied on wayfinding technology. They frequently travelled alone and felt confident navigating new places independently.

- **Feedback on BlindSquare:** testers generally found BlindSquare very helpful for navigation and felt more confident in locations where it was used. However, they reported some issues, including problems with the app, battery life concerns, and challenges with background noise.
- **Improvement suggestions:** testers recommended several changes to improve Service Canada and Passport facilities:
  - reduce clutter
  - make queue boundaries more visible
  - ensure furniture is detectable by cane
  - align tactile floor markings with actual routes to waiting areas

These changes are aimed at making navigation easier and safer for visitors with a visual impairment.

### Consulting clients with disabilities in program design

The Chief Client Experience Office (CCXO) conducted usability testing to make sure their web content and online tools are easy for everyone, including persons with disabilities. This helps make the web more accessible for all and shows our organization's commitment to diversity.

- **[Canada Pension Plan Disability \(CPPD\) review:](#)** from March 19 to March 25, 2024, CCXO tested the CPPD eligibility information on [Canada.ca](#). They held 17 remote sessions with persons with disabilities to assess how well the content worked and to find areas that needed improvement
- **Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) testing:** from May 1 to May 14, 2024, CCXO tested a prototype of the CDCP online application. They held 15 remote sessions to see how easy and accessible the application was for persons with different disabilities and to find out what worked well and what could be improved

### Key challenges

The CX survey highlights the following challenges and reflect ongoing issues that persons with disabilities have faced:

- **trouble using the Service Canada website:** clients reported difficulties with the general eligibility information on our websites, particularly when it didn't align with their personal situations. They found the explanations about eligibility and required documentation to be too lengthy and unclear, which made the online application process confusing

- **applying for Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D):** clients reported challenges when applying for CPP-D due to the lengthy application form and difficult question format. Those on medication, with limited hand movement, or experiencing mental health issues found it hard to concentrate, making it difficult to complete the application independently without family assistance
- **accessibility of Service Canada centres:** clients faced challenges such as being unable to visit a Service Canada Centre during business hours or living too far away. Others expressed frustration with long wait times and lines, which were particularly difficult for those with mobility issues
- **call centre wait times:** while fewer clients reported dissatisfaction with call wait times in 2023 compared to previous years, it remained the most common issue, with some clients still struggling to reach an agent quickly
- **needing assistance from others:** in 2023, more clients needed assistance from individuals outside of Service Canada to access services. For example, clients with vision impairments often relied on family members, used magnifying glasses, or printed forms in larger fonts. Additionally, some clients required significant help from family members or their case managers due to their disabilities

### Suggestions for future accessibility plans

Clients receiving disability-related benefits have shared these ideas for improvements for our consideration in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **narrative responses:** allow clients to describe their situation in their own words and provide more space for their answers
- **verbal options:** offer the choice to answer questions verbally instead of just in writing
- **simpler instructions:** provide clearer and simpler instructions on how to apply or qualify for benefits
- **larger fonts:** increase the font size on forms to 14 or 16 for better readability
- **dedicated help line:** set up a special help line for clients applying for disability benefits
- **online chat:** create an online chat option with a Service Canada representative to enhance the experience for CPP-D clients

We recognize that significant gaps in service experience between clients with disabilities and the general population still exist. ESDC is committed to making improvements in our design and delivery of programs and services. We aim to realize our desired results by ensuring that our in-person, phone and online client services are accessible for persons with disabilities.

## 10. Progress by areas in section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

In this section, we outline our efforts to achieve our goal of becoming a barrier-free organization by 2040. We detail how we are actively removing existing barriers and identifying new ones in the priority areas specified in Section 5 of the [ACA](#).

This year, a new direction on prescribed presence in the workplace will require employees to work onsite 3 days a week, while executives must work 4 days a week. We are also providing updates on the 68 activities outlined in our 2022 [3-year accessibility plan](#). To date, 22 activities have been completed, and 42 are on track to continue into 2025, with some becoming part of our regular work. All these activities work together to achieve the [vision and 8 desired results](#) in our accessibility plan.

In this year's progress report, we are also measuring the impact of our efforts through a performance measurement framework, which helps us track how effectively ESDC is removing barriers identified during our consultations. We established short-term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the next 4 years to focus on achieving the desired outcomes. As we collect more data, we plan to add additional KPIs to further refine our measurements and ensure we are meeting our accessibility goals.

Each priority area section features a “spotlight” to highlight how we are making real progress in removing accessibility barriers. While we celebrate these achievements, we recognize that there is still much work ahead to fully realize our vision.

### Employment

#### Barriers identified in our plan

- The process for requesting workplace accommodations is confusing and causes delays
- Employees with disabilities do not have a safe, neutral place to go for help and support
- Managers do not have the awareness and training needed to effectively support their employees with disabilities
- Employees with disabilities fear disclosing their disability and asking for support
- Employees with disabilities perceive unfairness in hiring, onboarding, training and career advancement practices
- There is not enough support for employees with disabilities who experience harassment or discrimination

## Progress in removing or preventing barriers

ESDC is proud to be an implementation partner in the Better Accommodation Project (BAP), a 1-year initiative launched in September 2024 by the Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities. The project aims to create transformative change in accommodations for federal employees with disabilities across the public service. As a partner, ESDC is committed to improving the accommodation process within our department and collaborating with other partners to test solutions, share best practices, and learn together—all while upholding the “Nothing About Us Without Us” principle.

In the first phase of BAP, the Deputy Minister Champion’s Office conducted research and analysis on accommodation best practices both inside and outside the public service. ESDC also formed an internal Advisory Group of human resources experts and practitioners to provide guidance. This effort has helped us better understand the range of barriers in the accommodation process and identify key factors for ensuring employees receive timely, effective, and respectful accommodations.

Our Human Resources Services Branch is focused on identifying pain points and recommending improvements in critical areas. As 1 of 9 implementation partners, ESDC will continue exploring new solutions and strategies to improve accommodations.

We’re also advancing our Plan to attract and recruit employees with disabilities, while working to remove and prevent barriers in the workplace. These efforts are part of our commitment to acting on employee feedback and exploring innovative tools to enhance workplace accessibility. However, there’s still work to be done. Our recent department-wide survey revealed a 25% gap in satisfaction between employees with disabilities and those without, highlighting the need for continued progress.

Only 14% of employees with disabilities feel that ESDC is meeting its recruitment and retention goals and providing timely access to workplace accommodations, compared to 39% of employees without disabilities. This major gap highlights the need for ongoing efforts to improve support and ensure equal access for all employees.

To address this, ESDC created the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP), which works closely with employees and managers to develop solutions and strategies for accommodations. The CoE OEP continues to evolve, expanding its focus to include disability management, with cross-trained advisors helping both employees and managers navigate various challenges.

ESDC is also playing a key role in the public service goal of hiring 5,000 persons with disabilities by 2025. Since the launch of our accessibility strategy in April 2020 through July 2024, we have hired 2,031 employees with disabilities, bringing our total to 3,959. While there is still work to be done, we are making progress—workforce representation of persons with disabilities has risen to 8.4% from 7.7% since July 2023.



Our branches and regions are piloting innovative approaches to recruit and onboard employees with disabilities. For example, the Quebec region uses a “single desk” system to simplify onboarding, the Atlantic region consults regularly with the Employment Equity and Diversity Committee, and the Western and Territories region partners with WorkBC to support prospective employees through the application process.

In addition, we held monthly information sessions for managers and employees at all levels and created a comprehensive toolkit shared through official channels. These efforts aim to raise awareness, educate our staff, and promote best practices for the duty to accommodate process.

### Key performance indicators

Starting April 1, 2024, we are using a performance measurement framework from our previous report to track progress on the 2022 ESDC Accessibility Plan. This framework allows us to monitor how well we are meeting the 8 desired results. We will update the key performance indicators as additional data sources become available, ensuring that we can accurately measure and report on success.

For employment, we are measuring baseline data for persons with disabilities and setting targets based on data for employees without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

### Short-term outcomes (2 to 4 years)

**Table 2: a) Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
Total # of employees who self-identify as having a disability	1,652	2,839	3,307	Diversity Outreach Recruitment Retention and Advancement (DORRA) administrative database
% of employees with disabilities who stay at ESDC for at least 2 years	70.5%	71%	75.2% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft Human Resources (HR) system
Annual promotion rate of persons with disabilities	4.1%	6%	6.8% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft HR system

Note 1:

In addition to representation, retention and promotion indicators, the department will also look at hiring and departure patterns of employees with disabilities to compare them with those without disabilities. At ESDC, employees leaving the department are provided with an exit survey questionnaire to complete on a voluntary basis, and to help ESDC improve the workplace and our recruitment and retention practices.

Exit survey responses are anonymous and grouped with those of other respondents when reporting on the results. Individual responses and results for groups of fewer than 10 respondents will not be reported or shared.

All information provided in the exit survey questionnaire is treated in a confidential manner under the authority the [Federal Public Service Labour Relations Act](#) and the [Financial Administration Act](#). Personal Information collected in the general information section is done in accordance with the [Privacy Act](#), the [Department of Employment and Social Development Act](#), and other applicable legislation and will be used for research, policy, and/or evaluation purposes only.

**Table 3: b) Improved access to workplace accommodations**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees with disabilities who state that accessibility or accommodation issues cause stress at work to a very large extent	15%	3%	To a very large extent = 9%	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 72o)

**Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years)**

**Table 4: c) ESDC is representative and leads in retaining employees with disabilities**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of ESDC employees who self-identify as having a disability	7.1%	9.6%	8.0%	PeopleSoft HR system

**Table 5: d) Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees with disabilities who agree that they can initiate a formal recourse process without fear of reprisal	49%	64%	49% (most positive or least negative answers)	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 41)

**Spotlight: “Knock on Our Door” and other safe space resources for employees and managers**

ESDC launched the “Knock on Our Door” campaign to highlight the confidential and impartial resources available to support employees with and without disabilities at ESDC. This helps create a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and most importantly, safe.

This also addresses the barriers noted in our accessibility plan related to safe, neutral places to go for help and support for employees with disabilities who experience harassment and discrimination.

Workplace issues are present, and when employees encounter challenges, seeking support is a courageous and proactive choice. However, we recognize that employees may not always know where to start or whom to contact for help. Employees can consult with each of these offices confidentially without having to launch a formal process:

- Harassment and Violence Centre of Expertise
- Centre for Informal Resolution and Coaching
- Office of Values and Ethics
- ESDC Ombuds Office
- Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential
- Senior Disclosure Officer

Each office is open as an initial point of contact, serving as a safe space to express barriers and issues. Employees may also be guided toward additional resources tailored to better support their specific needs.

A clinical consultation service through Telus is available to assist managers in addressing workplace situations, such as when an employee faces mental health challenges or has an

invisible disability. This service provides managers with guidance on how to better support employees, helping them remain engaged and productive in the workplace.

Additionally, ESDC has launched a pilot project offering certified Occupational Therapists to provide professional advice and guidance for both employees and managers. This service helps employees express their functional limitations and work-related barriers while identifying potential solutions to address those challenges.

**Table 6: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Employment)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
1.1 Create a centre of expertise that applies a holistic approach to workplace accommodations	By 2023	Completed
1.2 Promote the Treasury Board Secretariat's self-identification platform and the benefits of self-identifying as a person with a disability	By 2023	Delayed (Pending launch from Treasury Board Secretariat)
1.3 Explore ways in which the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport could be integrated with ESDC's existing workplace accommodations and wellbeing tools, such as the PeopleSoft Accommodations module and the Employee Wellness Profile	By 2025	On track
1.4 Explore the development of a sponsorship program for executives who identify as a person with a disability	By 2024	On Track
1.5 Review our HR systems to identify systemic barriers that affect persons with disabilities and develop an action plan	By 2024	On track
1.6 Ensure hiring documents are accessible and include information about an employee's right to accommodation in the workplace	By 2024	On track
1.7 Support the public service commitment to hire 5,000 persons with disabilities. ESDC's target is to hire 1,187 persons with disabilities	By 2025	On track

Activities	Timeline	Status
1.8 Test new approaches to improve the onboarding experience of employees with disabilities at ESDC	Ongoing	On track
1.9 Develop retention strategies for employees with disabilities	Ongoing	On track
1.10 Enhance ESDC’s workforce reports by including information about recruitment, departures and promotions of employees with disabilities	Ongoing	On track
1.11 Track accommodation requests to identify issues that cause delays and develop solutions	Ongoing	On track
1.12 Promote the Employee Wellness Profile. This is an online tool that helps employees and managers have conversations about workplace accommodations	2023	Completed

### Challenges and new barriers

This year, we focused on consulting with our employees through the “Building a Barrier-Free Workplace” corporate department-wide survey to assess our progress in removing obstacles for employees with disabilities. Only 28% of respondents feel that ESDC has made significant progress in recruiting, retaining, and advancing employees with disabilities, as well as providing timely workplace accommodations. The survey results reveal a notable gap between employees with disabilities and those without, indicating that barriers in our employment practices persist.

To address these issues at ESDC, we will take a clear and supportive approach. First, we will simplify the process for requesting workplace accommodations to make it straightforward and efficient, reducing delays and confusion. We will continue to create a dedicated, safe space where employees with disabilities can seek help without fear of judgment.

To alleviate concerns about disclosing disabilities, we will cultivate a culture of openness and reassurance, ensuring employees feel safe and supported when requesting assistance. Additionally, we will review and enhance our hiring, onboarding, training, and career advancement practices to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all employees with disabilities. Finally, we will strengthen our support systems to address harassment and discrimination, fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace for everyone.

The directive to work onsite 3 days a week has sparked concerns, especially among employees with disabilities, who are concerned about the impact on their work and the need for additional support. Many employees feel that they were not sufficiently consulted about this change, leading to uncertainty and apprehension regarding their ability to adapt.

As more employees request accommodations, concerns have been raised regarding the handling of personal information and the assurance of privacy. Some employees are frustrated by having to repeatedly share their information.

Many employees, including those with disabilities, carry significant caregiving responsibilities. During our consultations with the Employees with Disabilities Network, employees expressed that current policies may hinder their ability to balance work and caregiving duties.

Additionally, employees with disabilities are experiencing rising costs, such as frequent doctor's visits, which can be both financially and emotionally burdensome. There is also a growing need for more training and resources to empower employees to understand their rights and effectively advocate for themselves in the workplace.

### Suggestions for future accessibility plans

ESDC will continue to prevent and address harassment and discrimination against persons with disabilities. We will take steps to make the workplace more inclusive and supportive. We will set up learning sessions where employees with disabilities can share their experiences, helping to improve understanding and foster empathy and respect.

In addition, we have seen an increase in mental health issues and invisible disabilities. ESDC is committed to improving support by offering more mental health resources, such as confidential counselling services and wellness programs. We recognize the challenges this issue brings and are dedicated to creating a safe space where employees can openly discuss mental health concerns.

To further support this effort, ESDC introduced the Manager's Guide and Tools on Suicide and Distress in the Workplace. This guide helps managers provide better support and ensures that vital resources are easily accessible to those in need.

We will also provide training for managers to recognize and address mental health needs effectively. By implementing these actions, we aim to create a safer, more supportive environment for everyone.

To remove the barriers identified, ESDC will address the following in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **enhance training and career development:** develop training programs and create more opportunities for career advancement to overcome the barrier of limited growth. This could include mentorship programs, professional development workshops, and defined career progression pathways

- **improve accessibility of information and tools:** ensure all necessary information, tools, and resources are easy to locate and access. This may involve improving internal search functions, creating centralized resource hubs, and ensuring training materials are readily available
- **foster awareness and empathy:** increase empathy and understanding of the lived experiences of persons with disabilities through targeted training and awareness programs. Encourage a culture of inclusivity and respect with regular workshops and communication campaigns
- **improve onsite accessibility:** conduct an accessibility audit of onsite facilities and implement necessary changes to improve the physical work environment for all employees
- **promote open communication on accessibility needs:** encourage a culture of openness where employees feel even more comfortable discussing their accessibility needs. Provide training for supervisors on how to handle these discussions effectively
- **maintain and build on respect and communication:** maintain the current practices that promote respect and effective communication within teams. Consider recognizing and rewarding these positive behaviours to reinforce them
- **streamline accommodation processes:** we will explore implementing a “one-stop-shop” approach to the duty to accommodate process, as recommended by the Ombuds Office. This will streamline the integration and sharing of information across the organization, creating greater efficiency. Our goal is to approach the duty to accommodate with a user-centric focus, ensuring a seamless experience throughout a person’s career and life events. Additionally, the department will continue to invest in services like the Centre of Expertise on Optimizing Employee Potential to enhance support for our employees
- **common hybrid work model:** increase consultation with employees with disabilities to better understand their needs and ensure accommodations are in place for the updated 3-day onsite work requirement
- **privacy concerns:** Implement secure and consistent processes for handling personal information related to accommodations, reducing the need for employees to repeatedly share sensitive details
- **caregiver support:** consider enhancing policies and systems to better support employees with caregiver responsibilities, ensuring they can effectively balance their work and caregiving duties

- **financial strain:** reduce the financial and emotional burden on employees with disabilities by minimizing the need for frequent doctors' notes and reassessing sick leave policies to provide adequate support
- **support for self-advocacy:** develop and provide more training, tools, and resources to empower employees in advocating for their rights and understanding their workplace entitlements

By focusing on these areas, ESDC will drive change in employment by improving our work environment, ensuring all employees feel supported, valued, and empowered to do their best. We are committed to achieving our desired results in recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities, helping them advance their careers, and providing timely access to accommodations when barriers cannot be removed.

## Built environment

### Barriers identified in our plan

- Building code standards alone do not ensure workplace accessibility
- Availability of accessibility features varies across our offices and Service Canada Centres

### Progress in removing or preventing barriers

This year, as employees transition to the Common Hybrid Work Model, they will spend more time onsite in the workplace. With this shift, we are committed to addressing physical barriers in our work environment.

Our department-wide survey highlights the need for these efforts: only 34% of employees with disabilities find their onsite work environment accessible, compared to 65% of employees without disabilities, resulting in a gap of 31 percentage points.

To close this gap, we are implementing several initiatives. This includes the completion of a new interior design standard (3.1) that prioritizes accessibility. Additionally, we have completed 100% of our real property accessibility audits.

We are currently conducting a gap analysis, and any areas needing improvement will be integrated into our overall real property planning. ESDC meets monthly with the Employees with Disabilities Network and the Centre of Expertise to ensure that accommodation needs and barriers are considered from the outset in our planning process.

### Key performance indicators

For built environment, we are measuring baseline data for persons with disabilities and setting targets based on data for employees without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap



between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

### Long-term outcomes (6 years or more)

**Table 7: a) ESDC buildings, offices and facilities meet or exceed minimum industry requirements for accessibility**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees with disabilities who rate the physical work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 7%	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 72m)

### Spotlight: Toronto North York Flagship Service Canada Centre

Building on the success of our Toronto North York Flagship Service Canada Centre, the Ontario region worked with subject matter experts to create a video highlighting the newly launched Phase 3. Key features include accessibility-by-design, showcasing how technology is being used to improve service delivery. This is highlighted in the regional Service Excellence Videos Series, which aims to enhance employee engagement and promote accessible workspaces and client services.

**Table 8: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Built environment)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
2.1 Update ESDC’s interior design standard to exceed minimum accessibility standards, with an added focus on invisible disabilities	By 2023	Completed
2.2 Ensure that the needs of employees with disabilities are considered in built environment decisions related to ESDC’s new hybrid work environment	By 2023	Completed
2.3 Complete accessibility audits for ESDC buildings, offices and facilities, and develop an action plan to address barriers	By 2025	On track
2.4 Engage stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, to ensure ESDC buildings,	Ongoing	On track

Activities	Timeline	Status
offices and facilities exceed minimum accessibility standard		

### Challenges and new barriers

Barriers remain in our physical workplaces, impacting both employees with and without disabilities. According to our survey data, only 27% of employees with disabilities and 52% of employees without disabilities agreed with the statement, “Individuals and persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to ESDC buildings, offices, and facilities.”

We have completed 100% of our building accessibility audits, and we are in the process of developing detailed plans to enhance accessibility at sites with identified barriers. These improvements will be implemented over several years as we continue to assess and adapt our strategies to align with the common hybrid work model environment.

### Suggestions for future accessibility plans

To resolve the barriers identified in consultations, ESDC will address the following in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **align lease renewals with funding:** adjust our lease renewal strategy to fit within our budget constraints, allowing us to make accessibility improvements more quickly
- **collaborate on building codes:** continue partnering with groups like the Canadian Standards Association to stay updated on changes to building codes and ensure we apply these updates

ESDC is dedicated to steering progress in our built environment, ensuring that persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to our buildings, offices, and facilities, as part of our commitment to achieving our desired results.

### Information and communication technologies (ICT)

#### Barriers identified in our plan

- Some software, online tools and phone systems need to be checked for accessibility, and known issues need to be fixed. Often, commercial-off-the-shelf commercial software and tools do not meet accessibility standards
- There are no mandatory procedures to create or acquire internal documents, web content, and software
- Some learning content is not fully accessible

- The process to request workplace accommodations is confusing and causes delays in obtaining assistive and adaptive technology
- Some employees are not aware of the assistive and adaptive technology that are available to them
- Employees need more coaching on how to use assistive and adaptive technology and equipment

## Progress in removing or preventing barriers

Ensuring that all our technology is accessible from the start is crucial for creating an inclusive workplace. Accessible tools, applications, software, and systems allow employees with disabilities to do their jobs effectively, helping us make the most of everyone's talents.

To be a truly inclusive department that reflects the Canadian population, we need accessible information and equipment to attract and keep top talent. Our recent department-wide survey showed that only 35% of employees with disabilities feel that our ICT products, services, and content are accessible to all users, compared to 57%, showing a gap of 22 percentage points.

We will address this gap by evaluating our technology, such as the HR system (PeopleSoft) and our learning platform (Saba), for accessibility issues. The PeopleSoft team has upgraded and will continue to upgrade the application to take advantage of Oracle's latest improvements, ensuring a more accessible and efficient system for all users.

Training on accessible technology remains a top priority. Since January 21, 2023, the IT Accessibility Office (ITAO) and the College@ESDC have offered nearly 84 courses to help employees incorporate accessibility into their daily work. The College@ESDC has developed or updated over 300 hours of accessibility-focused training, specifically aimed at employees managing programs such as CPP, CPPD, Old Age Security (OAS), and Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP).

Currently, the ITAO and College@ESDC are collaborating on a new course that emphasizes the importance of digital accessibility. This course aims to equip all employees with the essential knowledge to work in an accessible and inclusive manner.

All learning tools are tested for accessibility and adhere to the required standards. This includes making user experience and accessibility enhancements to our Learning Management System (LMS) and improving training surveys to generate detailed accessibility reports. These initiatives reflect our commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment for all employees.

### Key performance indicators

For ICT, we are measuring baseline data for persons with disabilities and setting targets based on data for employees without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

### Short-term outcomes (2 to 4 years)

**Table 9: a) Employees with disabilities have the tools and technologies to perform their job**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees with disabilities who state that they have the tools, technology, and equipment to do their job (consult note 2)	83%	91%	83% (most positive or least negative answers)	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 1)

Note 2:

At ESDC, we have established service standards to monitor requests for accommodating employees with disabilities. However, we do not use these standards as performance indicators, as adaptive technology can be complex and often requires customization to meet each individual’s specific needs. This approach allows us to provide tailored solutions that effectively address the unique challenges faced by employees with disabilities, ensuring they receive the appropriate support and resources.

**Table 10: b) ESDC external IT solutions meet accessibility standards and requirements**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual	Data source
% of new external solutions / applications that meet accessibility standards (consult note 3 in the Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years) section)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

**Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years)**

**Table 11: c) ESDC internal IT solutions meet accessibility standards and requirements**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual	Data source
% of <b>existing and internal</b> IT solutions / applications that meet accessibility standards (consult note 3)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Note 3:

At ESDC, we want to ensure that any new tools or applications we consider from outside meet accessibility standards. To do this, we will conduct a feasibility analysis, which means we’ll evaluate how practical and effective these solutions will be for our needs. Additionally, we’re developing clear guidelines to help us distinguish between “new” solutions that we create ourselves and “external” ones that come from outside sources. By taking these steps, we aim to provide a more inclusive environment for everyone.

**Spotlight: Thinking outside the box about accessible ICT**

The IT Accessibility Office (ITAO) has been testing a new 3D printer to help improve IT accessibility for employees. With this printer, we can create advanced tools, like replacement keys for adaptive keyboards, which makes it easier to fix problems quickly.

In addition, ITAO has reserved 40 high-performance laptops for employees with disabilities. We are also partnering with business services to prioritize and fast-track requests for new or updated adaptive technology software. This will ensure employees get the tools they need faster and with less hassle.

**Table 12: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Information and communication technologies (ICT))**

Activities	Timeline	Status
3.1 Simplify the process for providing employees with adaptive IT tools and technologies	Ongoing	On track
3.2 Enhance training for IT staff to better support employees who use adaptive IT tools and technologies	Ongoing	On track
3.3 Explore options to increase ESDC capacity for usability and accessibility testing	By 2023	Completed

Activities	Timeline	Status
3.4 Participate in the development of a federal ICT Accessibility Standard and Scorecard	Ongoing	On track
3.5 Procure a new learning management system that is accessible and cloud based	By 2028	On track
3.6 Complete an accessibility assessment of PeopleSoft, ESDC’s human resources management system, and fix issues that are identified using various means to make the application as accessible as possible	Ongoing	In process and on track
3.7 Advance the IT Accessibility Compliance Project. This project will make all ESDC IT applications compliant with accessibility standards	N/A	Discontinued
3.8 Conduct accessibility assessments before buying new ICT products	Ongoing	On track
3.9 Continue to make online learning content and course delivery accessible, and provide alternate formats when needed	Ongoing	On track
3.10 Improve ESDC’s current learning management system by fixing known accessibility issues and continuously monitor	Ongoing	On track

**Challenges and new barriers**

While we have made strides in improving internal accessibility at ESDC, employees with disabilities still face significant barriers with ICT. In our department-wide survey, only 49% of respondents agreed that ICT products, services, and content are accessible for everyone.

Additionally, 11% of employees reported problems with software, online tools, and phone systems. This issue is more pronounced among employees with disabilities, with 14% experiencing difficulties compared to 9% of those without disabilities. These inaccessible systems can reduce productivity and make it harder for employees with disabilities to feel fully included in the workplace. We also heard that:

- there is an inconsistent understanding among ESDC managers about the procedures for providing accommodations to employees

- the approval of non-accessible content across ESDC contributes to the belief that accessibility is optional
- there is a perception that the workplace promotes a culture of tolerance rather than true inclusion

To truly be inclusive, accessibility must be built into all ICT from the start, rather than relying solely on reactive, individual accommodations.

### Suggestions for future accessibility plans

To resolve the barriers identified in our consultations, ESDC will focus on the following areas in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **pilot automation:** test automated systems for assessing IT accessibility to streamline the evaluation process
- **enhance user testing:** collaborate with the Employees with Disabilities Network to strengthen our user testing capabilities
- **prioritize based on feedback:** use feedback from users with disabilities to guide and prioritize improvements in our IT accessibility processes and initiatives
- **learning and training:** make learning and training about ICT accessibility part of our mandatory learning curriculum for all ESDC employees

ESDC will continue to lead efforts in this priority area. Our goal is to ensure that our existing and new information and communication technologies (ICT) products, services, and content are accessible to all users.

## Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies

### Barriers identified in our plan

- There are no mandatory requirements to make all internal documents and web content fully accessible
- Employees at all levels need more training and guidance on accessibility, inclusion and barriers faced by persons with disabilities
- Clients with disabilities experience barriers in finding and understanding the information they need to apply for programs and services
- Clients with disabilities experience barriers moving through the steps and gathering information required to apply for programs and services and when needing to explain their situation

## Progress in removing or preventing barriers

Accessible communication is essential to ensure everyone, including persons with disabilities, has equal access to information and can fully participate. According to our department-wide survey, 41% of employees with disabilities feel that ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language, compared to 59%, showing a gap of 18 percentage points.

To close the gap in accessibility, ESDC is committed to making our communications more inclusive. We will use plain language, add alternative text for images, and provide content in different formats.

In the past year, we have promoted accessible meetings and events by including a message in all invitations that says, “If you need any support to participate fully, please contact us as soon as possible.” This approach allows individuals to request necessary accommodations in advance.

We have also raised awareness through regular company messages and provided IT guidance on how to make documents and meetings accessible. Additionally, we encouraged the Executive Committee secretariats to ensure that all presentation materials meet accessibility standards.

To date, we have trained over a thousand employees on how to create accessible and plain language content for the web. This is a major step forward in our goal to improve communication across the department.

As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance online benefits and program delivery, we are also improving our web content to make online services more accessible and user-friendly for everyone.

## Key performance indicators

In communication, we are collecting baseline data on how easily clients with disabilities can find, understand, and apply for selected programs. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.



## Short-term outcomes (2 to 4 years)

**Table 13: a) ESDC external published content meets accessibility standards and requirements**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of EI/ CPP/ CPP-D/ OAS/ Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)/ Social Insurance Number (SIN) clients with disabilities who report that it was <b>easy to find information about the program</b> on the Government of Canada website	59%	79%	63% (consult Note 4)	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 184 of the pdf
% of EI/ CPP/ CPP-D/ OAS/ GIS/ SIN clients with disabilities who report it was <b>easy to understand information</b> about the program on the Government of Canada website	64%	75%	76% (consult Note 4)	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 184 of the pdf
% of EI, CPP/ CPP-D/ OAS/ GIS/ SIN clients with disabilities who report it was <b>easy to find out the steps to apply</b> on the Government of Canada website	54%	78%	72% (consult Note 4)	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 184 of the pdf

Note 4:

Indicators used to report on the ease in understanding and finding information about selected programs such as EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS and SIN by clients with disabilities should be considered as proxies. Feedback from clients with disabilities are often affected by whether they were eligible to receive benefits from these programs. At ESDC, we strive to narrow the gap between clients with disabilities and those without disabilities.

### Spotlight: A Way with Words and Images 2024

We know that words matter. To support more effective communication about accessibility and persons with disabilities, ESDC updated an existing publication, “A way with words and images”. This is a guide to support communication with and about persons with disabilities in writing, speech, and images. It aims to foster an accessibility-conscious and disability-

confident Canada. It is intended to support the federal public service and all Canadians to communicate accurately and confidently and recognizes that communicating effectively needs a case-by-case approach as different groups and individuals have different preferences.

The Office for Disability Issues developed the guide with input from disability experts and persons with disabilities that is available for a free download. This guide will continue to change as our understanding of disability and preferred terminology evolves.

**Table 14: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Communication, other than ICT)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
4.1 Ensure ESDC executive committee meetings and meeting materials are accessible	By 2023	Completed
4.2 Ensure documents published under proactive disclosure rules are accessible	By 2023	Completed
4.3 Update and promote “A Way with Words” and Images. This guidance helps federal employees use appropriate language to communicate effectively about disability in writing, speech and images	By 2023	Completed
4.4 Update and promote guidance on preparing accessible content and holding accessible meetings and events	Ongoing	On track
4.5 Provide training on how to create accessible and plain language content for the web	Ongoing	On track
4.6 Ensure that all-staff meetings and events held at the department-wide level are accessible	Ongoing	On track

**Challenges and new barriers**

We are making progress on accessible communications at ESDC. According to our department-wide survey, 52% of respondents believe our communications are accessible and use plain language.

However, 25% of employees with disabilities still have trouble finding information and resources, compared to 13% of those without disabilities, showing a gap of 12 percentage points. While we have expanded our training on plain language and accessible content, we

need to make sure these resources are easy to find so all employees can use them in their daily work.

## Suggestions for future accessibility plans

To address the barriers found during our consultations, ESDC will focus on the following actions in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **encourage an “accessibility from the start” mindset:** ensure that processes and checklists are in place so that all employee documents and web content are accessibility at the time of creation
- **share accessibility tips:** continue to promote accessibility tips and best practices for accessible communications in our corporate messages
- **update guidelines:** include descriptive meeting introductions and check participants about their accessibility needs
- **ensure accessible training:** encourage training on accessible meetings and events to employees’ learning plans in their performance agreements
- **create accessible templates:** develop corporate templates with built-in accessibility instructions
- **promote tools:** encourage the use of accessibility tools such as the Microsoft accessibility checker
- **centralize resources:** ensure tools related to accessible content, meetings and events so that employees can easily find them and incorporate those practices into their day-to-day

ESDC will continue to advocate for change by realizing our desired result to ensure our communications are accessible and written in plain language.

## Procurement of goods, services and facilities

### Barriers identified in our plan

- Accessibility requirements are not always considered when buying goods and services
- There are often delays in purchasing assistive and adaptive technology and equipment
- Managers lack training in accessible procurement

**Progress in removing or preventing barriers**

Accessible procurement means considering the needs of all users when buying products or services, not just following rules. It’s about creating solutions that work for everyone from the start, which can be cheaper than fixing or replacing them later.

Our department-wide survey found that only 25% of employees with disabilities believe that accessibility is considered when purchasing goods, services, and facilities, while 49% of those without disabilities feel this way. This shows a gap of 24 percentage points.

To reduce this gap, ESDC is committed to making our procurement practices more accessible and has already taken several steps to improve this area:

- **leadership and collaboration:** we are actively involved in groups where we share and learn about best practices for accessible procurement. We co-chair the Agents of Change Community of Practice, which helps us work together and exchange valuable information with other procurement experts
- **offering more support:** our procurement officers are dedicated to working closely with business leads. They provide guidance and create procurement documents that are easy to understand and meet the needs of everyone who will use them
- **training:** we have delivered sessions to raise awareness about accessibility from the start of the procurement process. We also offer the “Procurement 101” course, which helps business leads understand how to include accessibility criteria from the start
- **increasing access to vendors:** we are partnering with Shared Services Canada to create a Request for Standing Offer. This will help us access IT accessibility services that can be used by ESDC, improving our procurement options

**Key performance indicators**

For procurement, we are measuring baseline data for the number of ESDC procurement contracts awarded against the target of contracts that considered accessibility requirements.

**Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years)**

**Table 15: a) ESDC procures goods and services that exceed minimum accessibility requirements**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of procurement contracts that meet and can be validated against accessibility	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD (align with TBS)

requirements and standards – Under review				
<b>New:</b> Selected number of ESDC procurements / contracts that incorporate accessibility considerations – Updated in June 2024	Review between 10 to 15 contracts that were awarded in fiscal year 2023 to 2024	100% of selected ESDC contracts considered accessibility requirements	69.23% of contracts considered accessibility requirements (9/13)	Procurement

**Spotlight: Procurement training and awareness**

ESDC has updated our procurement plan and training materials with the latest information, tools, and resources about accessibility. This helps business owners and contracting authorities understand how to include accessibility in their purchases more easily and efficiently.

In addition, several internal messages were shared with procurement stakeholders at ESDC to raise awareness about the updated information on how to include accessibility in procurement activities. This is part of the ongoing progress in the department’s accessibility plan.

**Table 16: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Procurement of goods, services, and facilities)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
5.1 Explore options to prioritize buying accessibility-related goods and services in response to accommodation requests	By 2023	Completed
5.2 Explore options for creating a central fund for buying workplace accommodations	By 2025	On Track
5.3 Ensure managers are aware that they can use acquisition cards to buy different types of accommodations	By 2023	Completed
5.4 Conduct an assessment to better understand the issues in the procurement process that cause delays in buying accessible goods and services	By 2025	On Track

Activities	Timeline	Status
5.5 Ensure procurement officers are trained to help managers consider accessibility requirements at the start of the procurement process	By 2023	Completed
5.6 Make accessibility assessments mandatory for project approvals	By 2023	Completed
5.7 Ensure managers are aware of the resources available to help them define accessibility requirements for the goods and services they are buying	Ongoing	Completed

**Challenges and new barriers**

We understand that sometimes, just following accessibility standards isn’t enough to make sure the products and services we buy are truly accessible. It is important to involve users with different needs from the very beginning. This way, we can ensure that products and services can be used by people with a wide range of functional abilities and can be easily used by everyone without needing changes.

**Suggestions for future accessibility plan**

To resolve the barriers we found during our consultations, ESDC will focus on the following actions in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- use existing advisory committees representing users with disabilities to ensure products and services meet accessibility criteria
- help buyers utilize consultation mechanisms to verify that accessibility standards are effectively implemented
- ensure that we are tracking and monitoring accessibility in our procurement contracts, statements of work, and business requirements so that we can measure our progress in accessible procurement
- identify accessibility business requirements before starting procurement activities. To ensure accessibility by design, ask vendors and suppliers to show their commitment to accessibility from the start

ESDC is committed to ensuring that accessibility criteria are considered when purchasing goods, services, and facilities, and that products include accessibility features where appropriate to meet our desired results.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

### Barriers identified in our plan

According to the 2022 to 2023 Client Experience (CX) Survey and qualitative research:

- the overall satisfaction of clients with disabilities with their service experience is lower than that of clients overall (69% vs. 81%), and is lowest among Canada Pension Plan Disability clients (60%)
- clients with disabilities provided lower service channel satisfaction ratings compared to clients overall for services accessed through in-person, online and through specialized call centres

In addition, clients with disabilities reported that:

- program information, requirements and application forms are too complex
- the Service Canada website is difficult to navigate
- Service Canada Centres are not fully accessible, and accessibility features vary by office
- call centre wait times are too long
- they had to rely on others for help when accessing programs and services

Other barriers:

- accessibility requirements are not always considered in program and policy development
- employees do not fully understand the barriers faced by persons with disabilities

### Progress in removing or preventing barriers

Service accessibility is one of our top priorities. We aim to offer our clients flexible access to services, programs and benefits with clear, consistent information across service channels—online, phone or in-person.

Our department-wide survey revealed that only 41% of employees with disabilities feel that our client services are accessible compared to 62%, showing a gap of 21 percentage points.

To bridge this gap, ESDC is making our services easier to access by redesigning them, forming new partnerships, and connecting with different communities.

We updated our web pages for the Canada Summer Jobs and Youth Employment Skills Strategy to make them clearer. We also added automated features to PDF forms and made documents more friendly for screen readers.

Additionally, we improved information sessions and added accessibility features for the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability, including translating web pages into sign language (ASL and LSQ).

For the Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Agreement, we made websites easier to read and expanded video remote interpretation services. We launched the Service Referral Initiative to help marginalized individuals connect with Service Canada, and we tested eligibility letters for the Canadian Dental Care Plan to enhance accessibility.

Finally, we collaborated with 211/United Way to improve how people are referred to Service Canada Outreach Support Centres nationwide. We also extended the time users have to select options when using Interactive Voice Response systems, making them easier for everyone to use.

### Key performance indicators

For programs and services, we are measuring baseline data for clients with disabilities and setting targets based on data for clients without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

While feedback on benefits can vary depending on eligibility, ESDC is dedicated to closing the satisfaction gap between clients with disabilities and all clients. We have seen some positive changes in satisfaction levels. For instance, the gap for call centers decreased from -7% to -5%. The satisfaction rate for 1-800-O-Canada improved significantly, going from -8% to +9%, and eServiceCanada’s gap decreased from -6% to -4%.

However, satisfaction with in-person services has declined. The gap for in-person services increased from -11% to -13%, and for the My Service Canada Account (MSCA), it grew from -2% to -4%. These changes show us the areas where we still need to improve accessibility.

### Short-term outcomes (2 to 4 years)

**Table 17: a) All service channels are more accessible for clients with disabilities**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual as of July 2023	Data source
% of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with the overall quality of service of the Specialized Call Centres and the 1 800 O-Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialized call centres: 57%</li> <li>1 800 O-Canada: 51%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialized call centres: 64%</li> <li>1 800 O-Canada: 59%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialized call centres: 67%</li> <li>1 800 O-Canada: 79%</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 183 of the pdf



general information phone line				
% of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with the overall quality of service of Service Canada Centres	70%	74%	70%	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 183 of the pdf
% of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with the overall quality of service of My Service Canada Account (MSCA) and eServiceCanada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSCA: 68%</li> <li>• eServiceCanada: 70%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSCA: 70%</li> <li>• eServiceCanada: 76%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSCA: 69%</li> <li>• eServiceCanada: 68%</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 183 of the pdf

**Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years)**

**Table 18: b) Clients with disabilities who access and receive services from ESDC are satisfied with their service experience**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual as of July 2023	Data source
% of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with their service experience	69%	72%	71% (consult Note 5)	<a href="#">Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2022 to 2023</a> , consult page 183 of the pdf

Note 5: Since we don't have specific data sources to address the client service delivery barriers in the short-term, we are using client satisfaction feedback from the CX Survey. This gauges how well clients with disabilities who were either approved or denied for benefits can access information about programs like EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS, and SIN.

**Spotlight: Testing of the Canadian Dental Care Plan online application**

The Client Experience Office team within the Canadian Digital Service is working to help reduce inefficiencies and lack of accessibility to bring usability testing to more programs and regions. The team recently completed testing of the online application for the Canadian Dental Care Plan with people with disabilities—and is planning to test the future Canada Disability Benefit application in the same way.

**Table 19: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Design and delivery of programs and services)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
6.1 Inform our clients of services that do not yet meet accessibility standards and give them alternatives for accessing these services. We will do this by publishing accessibility statements for our websites, Service Canada Centres and contact centres	By 2025	Delayed (waiting for Treasury Board Secretariat guidance)
6.2 Update the training courses for ESDC employees who develop and deliver services. This will help them gain the skills they need to better support people with various types of disabilities	By 2025	Completed
6.3 Make it easier for persons with disabilities to provide accessibility-related feedback on programs and services without having to submit a formal complaint	By 2025	On track
6.4 Strengthen the role of the Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service. This team offers guidance on making services more accessible	By 2025	On track
6.5 Add a disability inclusion lens to the suite of tools used to perform intersectional analysis. This will ensure the lived experiences and needs of persons with disabilities are considered in policy and program development	By 2025	On track
6.6 Ensure all new or improved services (in-person, phone and online) are developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and address their feedback	Ongoing	On track
6.7 Ensure services, at all stages of development, meet or exceed standards for web accessibility, interior design and call centre best practices	Ongoing	On track

Activities	Timeline	Status
6.8 Address barriers in the in-person channel, including gaps identified by real property accessibility audits. We will also use outreach approaches to make it easier for persons with disabilities to access our programs and services	Ongoing	On track
6.9 Address barriers and develop accessibility best practices for the phone channel. This includes making it easier to use assistive technologies and to authorize a third party to act on a client's behalf	Ongoing	On track
6.10 Address barriers in the online channel	Ongoing	On track
6.11 Collect feedback from clients with disabilities through surveys and questionnaires	Ongoing	On track
6.12 Ensure the tools, documents and facilities used to deliver grants and contributions programs are more accessible	2024	Completed

### Challenges and new barriers

We have made strides in improving our service delivery, but clients with disabilities still report lower satisfaction than those without disabilities. According to our department-wide survey, only 53% of respondents feel that in-person, phone, and online services are accessible in the Delivery of Programs and Services priority area.

Some clients continue to face challenges when accessing Service Canada Centres. For example, those with mobility issues or children with disabilities find the in-person wait times too long. Others have asked for sensory-friendly spaces in Service Canada Centres. Many persons with disabilities mentioned difficulties like standing in line, problems with plexiglass barriers, and challenges with name-based queuing, particularly for those who are hard of hearing.

In the online channel, short time-outs for applications have caused frustration, forcing clients to start over repeatedly. Additionally, some clients need written explanations to help with their phone-based transactions.

Marginalized individuals have reported facing complex barriers when trying to access government programs. They suggested that a dedicated call center could assist with benefit applications and follow-ups, providing the support they need.

Finally, some members of the public expressed a desire to be included in future consultations on new and existing programs and policies, such as the Workforce Development Agreements, the Enabling Accessibility Fund, and the Canada Disability Benefit.

### Suggestions for future accessibility plans

To better support clients with disabilities, ESDC is committed to resolving existing barriers. In our 2025 Accessibility Plan, we will focus on several key areas to enhance accessibility and improve the overall experience for all clients:

- **create accessibility-friendly spaces:** set up a separate line or courtesy window for clients with accessibility needs and consider adding a sensory-friendly area in Service Canada Centres
- **explore communication options:** offer additional services for clients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities, such as text, chat, or Canada VRS (video relay service with sign language interpreters)
- **form an advisory board:** establish a board with persons with disabilities, community experts, and other stakeholders to identify barriers and develop client-focused solutions

ESDC is dedicated to achieving our program and service desired results by ensuring that our in-person, phone, and online client services are accessible to people with disabilities.

## Workplace culture

### Barriers identified in our plan

- Employees with disabilities face stigma, harassment and discrimination
- Employees at all levels need more training and guidance on accessibility and workplace accommodations
- Accessibility progress is slower than desired
- Employees with disabilities lack trust in the organization

### Progress in removing or preventing barriers

Since we rolled out our accessibility plan in 2022, we have seen more employees learning and applying accessibility best practices. Training and regular updates on inclusion are making a positive impact.

Many branches and regions have developed their own plans and resources to meet their employees' needs. However, our recent department-wide survey showed that only 20% of employees with disabilities feel confident that everyone at ESDC has the skills to create a barrier-free workplace, compared to 42%. This shows a gap of 2 percentage points.

To bridge the accessibility gap, ESDC has taken significant steps to improve services for all employees. The Quebec Region has developed a Regional Accessibility Plan and established a network to ensure timely implementation. Meanwhile, the Atlantic Region has launched a detailed work plan and created an Adaptive Technology Lending Library to provide ergonomic equipment and assistive devices for employees with disabilities or functional limitations. This program, initiated in April 2024, will officially launch by December 2024.

In Western Canada and the Territories, the Accessibility website has been updated, and an Accessibility Community of Practice has been created. This community provides workshops and user testing for new wellness tools. In Ontario, a strategy has been rolled out to engage leadership in accessibility and inclusion efforts.

We have also partnered with the Atlantic Employment Equity and Diversity Committee on various projects aimed at improving inclusion and accessibility. These projects include onboarding programs, the Employment Equity Talent Management Pipeline, and a new Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Intranet page.

At the branch level, the Income Security and Social Development Branch has raised awareness and supported events like the Canadian Congress on Disability and Inclusion. The Benefits and Integrated Services Branch has created a central hub for accessibility resources and used exit interviews to identify barriers employees face.

Additionally, the Innovation, Information, and Technology Branch has led several accessibility initiatives. The College@ESDC within the Human Resources Services Branch is advancing the Accessibility Learning Strategy, ensuring we stay on track to meet our goals by 2025.

Looking ahead, we will renew the Accessibility Learning Strategy in 2025 to further strengthen our commitment to accessibility and provide meaningful learning experiences.

### Key performance indicators

For workplace culture, we are measuring baseline data for persons with disabilities and setting targets based on data for employees without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

**Medium-term outcomes (4 to 6 years)**

**Table 20: a) Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees who report an increase in their level of knowledge related to systemic barriers after completing accessibility training	84.5%	86.5%	97% for fiscal year 2022 to 2023	Saba learning management system

**Table 21: b) Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2024	Data source
% of employees with disabilities who agree with the statement: “Overall, my department or agency treats me with respect.”	79%	90%	79% (most positive or least negative answers)	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 52)
% of ESDC employees with disabilities who would recommend ESDC as a great place to work	69%	82%	69% (most positive or least negative answers)	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 53)
% of employees with disabilities who strongly feel valued at work	65%	75%	65% (most positive or least negative answers)	<a href="#">2022 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada</a> (consult Question 11)

**Spotlight: Accessibility Advisory Group**

After consulting with our Employees with Disabilities Network, ESDC is forming an employee advisory group in 2025. Over 70 employees have shown interest in joining the Accessibility

Advisory Group, which will offer guidance and recommendations to help ESDC improve accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

This group will act as a bridge between the department and the disability community, providing a forum to discuss specific barriers faced at ESDC and propose creative solutions to overcome them. The group will represent a diverse range of perspectives, including employees with physical, visual, hearing, cognitive, and mental health disabilities.

**Table 22: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Workplace culture)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
7.1 Develop a communications strategy for the ESDC Accessibility Plan, as well as products to raise awareness of accessibility and disability inclusion	By 2023	Completed
7.2 Centralize accessibility learning and training	By 2023	Completed
7.3 Develop a costing and funding framework for the ESDC Accessibility Plan	By 2023	Completed
7.4 Review internal governance and accountability on accessibility and implement changes as appropriate	By 2023	Completed
7.5 Explore options for creating an “accessibility ambassadors” initiative	By 2023	Completed
7.6 Encourage regions and branches to develop their own accessibility plans that complement the ESDC Accessibility Plan	By 2024	On track
7.7 Develop and implement an accessibility learning strategy and monitor learning needs	By 2025	On track
7.8 Build the capacity of the ESDC Accessibility Office as it relates to publishing the department’s accessibility plan and progress reports and receiving feedback	By 2025	On track
7.9 Consult and actively engage the ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network on the design and implementation of accessibility initiatives	Ongoing	On track

Activities	Timeline	Status
7.10 Develop and deliver annual programming and communications for NAAW, IDPD and other events related to accessibility and disability inclusion	Ongoing	On track
7.11 Ensure that employees can easily find tools and resources on accessibility and workplace accommodations	Ongoing	On track
7.12 Encourage all employees to include clear, actionable accessibility commitments in their performance agreements	Ongoing	On track

**Challenges and new barriers**

Our consultations and feedback indicate that our department is becoming more confident about accessibility. However, we still have much to learn about disability inclusion and how to support employees with disabilities. It is important to address the myths and stigma surrounding this issue.

We must take further steps to acknowledge that persons with disabilities may belong to multiple equity groups that experience discrimination. By recognizing this intersectionality, we can create a more inclusive environment for everyone.

**Suggestions for future accessibility plans**

To address the barriers identified during our consultations, ESDC will focus on the following areas in our 2025 Accessibility Plan:

- **apply an intersectional lens:** ensure our plan addresses the diverse needs of all employees by considering various intersecting factors, like race, gender, as well as disability
- **maintain funding for the Employees with Disabilities Network:** Continue supporting the Employees with Disabilities Network to strengthen its role and impact
- **share best practices:** exchange successful accessibility strategies with other departments and partners to improve confidence and solve problems across the Government of Canada efficiently

We are committed to fostering a workplace culture where everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to help make the department barrier-free for persons with disabilities, ensuring we achieve our desired results.



## Data, research and analysis

### Barriers identified in our plan

- Employees do not fully understand the barriers faced by persons with disabilities
- There are no clear rules or processes to make sure accessibility is a priority

### Progress in removing or preventing barriers

Data is essential for making ESDC more inclusive and accessible. By collecting and reporting data, we can better understand the accessibility barriers in our department and measure our progress to ensure we are meeting our goals.

The department-wide survey revealed that only 19% of employees with disabilities believe ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify and remove accessibility barriers, compared to 50% of all respondents. This indicates a major gap of 31 percentage points.

To close this gap, ESDC is working to resolve accommodation requests more quickly. We developed a self-service automated reporting tool that allows branches and regions to organize data about requests, including their status and reasons for accommodation. This tool will help senior management identify areas where requests are not being addressed promptly.

Additionally, the ESDC Ombuds Office published its first annual report, which shares important statistics, observations, and recommendations to enhance employee well-being. The report highlights similar barriers to those found in our accessibility plan and stresses the need for senior management to prioritize diversity and inclusion in all our efforts. This is vital for creating a more inclusive and supportive workplace for everyone.

### Key performance indicators

For data and research, we are measuring baseline data for persons with disabilities and setting targets based on data for employees without disabilities. Our main objective is to close the gap between these groups, by reporting on the actuals. We want to make sure our efforts are effectively removing accessibility barriers.

### Short-term outcomes (2 to 4 years)

**Table 23: a) ESDC develops a performance measurement framework for the ESDC Accessibility Plan**

Performance indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual	Data source
<b>New:</b> Cross-section of employees with disabilities consulted for accessibility or testing for	As required	Not applicable	TBD (Data to be)	Accessibility survey and course

survey design and administration, or to review courses developed by the department – <b>Updated in June 2024</b>			collected in 2025)	updates or development Accessibility testing contracts (TBC)
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**Spotlight: 2024 Building a Barrier-Free Workplace employee consultation survey**

In May and June 2024, the ESDC Accessibility Office conducted a survey for all employees across the entire department to assess how well we are doing with disability inclusion in our workplace. The goal of the survey was to measure employee awareness of our Accessibility Plan, identify any gaps between employees with and without disabilities, and reveal persistent barriers.

With 12,069 employees participating, this year’s response rate increased by nearly 58% compared to our 2021 survey. These results will help us improve the work environment, provide better support for employees with disabilities, and track our progress in making ESDC a more inclusive place for everyone.

**Table 24: Status of 2022 ESDC accessibility plan activities (Data, research and analysis)**

Activities	Timeline	Status
8.1 Conduct research on cognitive disabilities and update the workplace accommodation process as needed	By 2023	Completed
8.2 Develop a performance measurement framework for the ESDC Accessibility Plan	By 2023	Completed
8.3 Assess ESDC’s diversity and inclusion training courses that relate to accessibility to ensure they are meeting the needs of employees	By 2024	On track
8.4 Collect employee feedback on the implementation of the ESDC Accessibility Plan	Ongoing	On track
8.5 Conduct employee surveys on accessibility	Ongoing	On track

## Challenges and new barriers

We have faced challenges in data, research, and analysis. For example, some of our data collection processes take a long time, and finding reliable sources for accessibility data can be tough. It's also difficult to turn this data into useful information.

Another issue we encountered was “consultation fatigue”. Some of our employees with disabilities mentioned they are tired of being asked the same questions by different groups and often feel they are not kept informed about how their input has been used.

## Suggestions for future accessibility plans

To address the barriers identified during our consultations, ESDC is committed to making important changes in our 2025 Accessibility Plan. We understand that listening to feedback is crucial for creating a more inclusive environment. Our plan will focus on the following areas to improve accessibility for everyone:

- **find efficient ways to get public input:** explore quicker and more effective methods for gathering feedback from the public
- **clarify use of input:** ensure that everyone we consult understands how their feedback will be used
- **improve project management:** enhance our skills in project management, planning, and reporting to better track and manage accessibility initiatives and identify barriers
- **refine measurement framework:** continue to collect evidence-based data to measure progress by improving our performance measurement framework and key performance indicators (KPIs)

ESDC will drive change and lead with evidence-based decision-making to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility, ensuring we achieve our desired results.

## Transportation

### Barriers identified in our plan

ESDC does not provide transportation services. When we created our 2022 accessibility plan, we reviewed our policies, practices, programs, and services for this priority area, and we had not identified any barriers. However, after hearing feedback during our consultations, we realize it's important to take an evergreen approach to checking if there are any accessibility issues that make it hard for employees to get to or move between our different work sites. We will re-assess this priority area when developing our 2025-2028 departmental Accessibility Plan.

## Suggestions for future accessibility plans

ESDC will consult with the Labour Relations and Occupational Health and Safety to possibly explore the following new activities in next year's plan:

- **ensure accessible transportation:** make it easy for employees attending in-person meetings to arrange accessible taxis, shuttles, or public transit
- **flexibility with transit times:** Allow flexibility for employees using accessible transit if their travel times don't match work hours. Offer breaks if needed after their transit
- **safe pick-up and drop-off:** provide safe and accessible pick-up and drop-off areas for all employees, including those with temporary injuries

## 11. Governance and accountability

We created the Director General Working Group and the Assistant Deputy Minister Committee on the ESDC Accessibility Plan. The members of these committees are responsible for the priority area(s) that align with their business lines. They oversee many aspects of accessibility at ESDC and play a leadership role in developing and implementing our accessibility plan and monitoring progress.

The Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN) also plays a key role in shaping accessibility at ESDC. ESDC relies on the Network for meaningful engagement and leadership when implementing accessibility initiatives. The EwDN's Champion and the ESDC Champion for Employees with Disabilities act as agents for change.

Finally, the ESDC Portfolio Management Board, chaired by the Deputy Minister, is responsible for approving the ESDC Accessibility Plan and progress reports. Members of the Board play a key role in enabling accountability, stewardship, and transparency on accessibility.

## 12. Tracking and measuring progress

The EAO is dedicated to overseeing the 68 activities outlined in our accessibility plan and ensuring we achieve the plan's [8 desired results](#). To see how effectively we're making our department more accessible, we developed a draft performance measurement framework with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in 2023.

This framework helps us track our progress across various priority areas and determine if we are successfully addressing the barriers identified through consultations. By monitoring these KPIs, we aim to get closer to achieving the 8 desired results of our accessibility plan.

Moving forward, we'll be adding more KPIs to our framework as we gain access to additional data sources. Some of these indicators are still in development and will be aligned with the Treasury Board Secretariat's [Accessibility Results Framework](#). Our performance results will guide us in making strategic data-based commitments to enhance accessibility.

This year, we focused our report on short-term KPIs for the next 2-4 years for each priority area. We measured the impacts of our actions while we aim to close the gaps in order to achieve planned activities.

While ESDC has made some strides in improving accessibility, we recognize that more work is needed. Our evidence-based performance measurement framework is essential for tracking progress and focusing on real outcomes, ensuring that we make meaningful advances in our accessibility efforts.

## Progress and achievements

**Workforce representation:** We have seen an increase in the proportion of employees with disabilities, now comprising 8% of our workforce compared to a baseline of 7.1%. While this is a step in the right direction, we are still working toward our goal of 9.6%. Notably, we hired 275 new employees with disabilities in the past year, with their percentage slightly exceeding that of new hires without disabilities.

**Retention and advancement:** Our retention rates are encouraging, with 75.2% of employees with disabilities remaining with us for over 2 years. Furthermore, 230 employees with disabilities were promoted, surpassing our target and reflecting our commitment to career growth and development for all staff members.

**Training impact:** Our training programs have yielded positive results. An impressive 97% of participants reported an increase in their understanding of accessibility issues. This increased awareness is vital as we strive to create a more inclusive workplace.

## Areas for improvement

**Workplace accommodations:** Despite progress, 83% of employees with disabilities felt they had the necessary tools and equipment for their roles, falling short of our 91% target. This gap highlights the need for continued focus on ensuring all employees have the resources they need.

**Support systems:** A significant concern remains the perceived safety of seeking help. Only 49% of employees with disabilities felt they could pursue assistance without fearing negative repercussions. Addressing this issue is crucial for fostering a supportive and open work environment.

**Client services satisfaction:** According to the 2022 to 2023 Service Canada Client Experience (CX) Survey, 71% of clients with disabilities expressed satisfaction with their service experiences. Satisfaction levels were particularly high with our call centres and online service channels, though there is room for improvement in our eServiceCanada offerings. We are committed to enhancing accessibility on our website and will use client feedback to drive these improvements.

## 13. Conclusion

ESDC is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for everyone. Our 3-year Accessibility Plan is on track, and we have made some good progress. We have laid essential groundwork to prepare for the 2025 ESDC Accessibility Plan, aimed at improving our policies, programs, services, and workplace.

We have seen strong momentum across the organization to remove and prevent barriers, even beyond the plan. However, there's still much work ahead to meet the needs of all employees and clients with disabilities to address their continuous pain points. The consultations have confirmed that making meaningful progress takes time—there are no quick fixes or one-size-fits-all solutions.

We are committed to keep learning and improving. Our employees and clients expect action not only within ESDC but across the Government of Canada. That's why we're working together to share ideas and best practices, so we can move forward faster.

Most importantly, we understand how critical it is to listen to employees, clients, and the public to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers. Your feedback is essential, and we will continue to listen, adjust, and remain committed to making ESDC barrier-free. This approach will help shape our 2025 ESDC Accessibility Plan and ensure we effectively measure and track our impact, enabling us to drive change as leaders in public service accessibility.

Our goal is to achieve our 8 desired results and to continue preventing new barriers as we embed a growth mindset in accessibility practices. Through high-quality measurement and strategic data driven decision-making, we are dedicated to creating a more accessible and inclusive environment for everyone—because accessibility is everyone's business!

## Appendix A: Employee consultations

This appendix provides details on the people we consulted, how and when we consulted, and the questions we asked.

## Building a barrier-free workplace survey

The survey was open to all ESDC employees from May 16 to June 21, 2024. It aimed to gather information on how well we're removing barriers and improving accessibility in the workplace. ESDC is committed to making sure everyone can fully participate and do their best work.

The survey was an important part of the [ESDC Accessibility Plan](#) and helped us set a baseline to measure our progress. Employees could share their views on barriers and accessibility anonymously, with results reported only for groups of ten or more to protect privacy. The survey included 19 opinion questions, with 8 additional socio-demographic questions, and provided valuable insights into how we can make our workplace more accessible for everyone.

### Questions

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

a. I get a sense of satisfaction from my work

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

b. I have the tools, technology, and equipment I need to do my job

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

c. I get the training I need to do my job

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

d. I know where to find information or training to use the virtual tools and the equipment I have

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

e. Members of my team communicate effectively with each other

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

f. The people I work with value my ideas, opinions, and lived experience

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

g. Overall, the people in my organization treat me with respect

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

h. When working remotely, I would consider my work environment accessible

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree



- Neither agree nor disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- i. When working onsite, I would consider my work environment accessible
- Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- j. I would feel comfortable discussing my accessibility needs with my immediate supervisor or manager
- Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable

A barrier is anything—including anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice—that hinders the full and equal participation in society of people with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

2. Please indicate the extent to which the following barriers impact the quality of your work:
- a. limited opportunities for training and career advancement
- To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable

- b. lack of respect due to harassment, discrimination, and microaggressions
  - To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- c. the process for requesting workplace accommodations is confusing and causes delays
  - To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- d. the software, online tools, and phone systems are not always accessible
  - To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- e. internal documents and web content are not fully accessible
  - To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Not applicable
- f. information, tools, and resources are difficult to find
  - To a very large extent
  - To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent

- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know
- Not applicable

g. learning and training related to my work is not easily accessible

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know
- Not applicable

h. lack of awareness and empathy for persons with disabilities' lived experience

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know
- Not applicable

3. Do you intend to leave your current position in the next 12 months?

- Yes
- No

4. (If Q3 yes) Please indicate your reason for leaving:

- to retire
- to pursue another position within my department or agency
- to pursue a position in another department or agency
- to pursue a position outside the federal public service
- end of my term, casual or student employment
- other

A person with a disability is a person with any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in

interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. (Source: ACA).

5. After reading the definition of disability above, do you consider yourself to be a person with disability?
  - Yes
  - No [skip to Q9]
  - I prefer not to answer [skip to Q9]
6. You indicated that you are a person with a disability. If you wish to provide further details, please select the box(es) that apply to you. (Mark all that apply.)
  - Seeing disability: affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight, and visual distortion
  - Hearing disability: affects ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness, or acoustic distortion
  - Speech disability: affects ability to talk, including total speech loss, partial speech, and speech distortion
  - Mobility disability: affects ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting your mobility
  - Challenges with flexibility or dexterity: affects ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands
  - Mental health disability: affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social / compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness
  - Sensory or environmental disability: affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities
  - Chronic health condition or pain: affects ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, and other disabilities or health conditions
  - Cognitive disability: ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication, and memory, including autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning disabilities
  - Intellectual disability: affects ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations
  - Other disability
  - Prefer not to specify

7. Have you self-identified to ESDC in PeopleSoft that you have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- I prefer not to answer

8. Why have you not self-identified to ESDC as having a disability? Please select one from the list below

- I have concerns regarding the privacy of my personal information
- I feel it would negatively impact my career
- I do not know how and/or where to self-identify
- I prefer not to answer

9. Excluding yourself, if applicable, please select all that apply to you from the list below

- I am a caregiver of someone who has a disability
- I have a family member or close friend who has a disability
- There is someone in my work unit who I know has a disability
- I know someone else who has a disability
- I do not think I know someone who has a disability

Accessibility - A product, service, program or environment is accessible if it is easily usable by people with and without disabilities and helps everyone participate fully and equally in society and realize their full potential.

10. I believe that ESDC is more accessible now than it was a year ago

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable

11. The following are the desired results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on whether ESDC has made progress in each of the Priority Areas over the past year
- a. Employment: ESDC recruits and retains employees with disabilities, advances their careers, and provides timely access to workplace accommodations
    - Not at all
    - Slight progress
    - Moderate progress
    - High level of progress
    - Don't know
  - b. Built Environment: Individual and persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to ESDC buildings, offices, and facilities
    - Not at all
    - Slight progress
    - Moderate progress
    - High level of progress
    - Don't know
  - c. Information and communication technologies (ICT): Existing and new information and communication technologies products, services and content are accessible for all users
    - Not at all
    - Slight progress
    - Moderate progress
    - High level of progress
    - Don't know
  - d. Communication, other than ICT: ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language
    - Not at all
    - Slight progress
    - Moderate progress
    - High level of progress
    - Don't know
  - e. Procurement of goods, services, and facilities: Accessibility criteria are considered when buying goods, services and facilities, and products include accessibility features where appropriate
    - Not at all
    - Slight progress

- Moderate progress
  - High level of progress
  - Don't Know
- f. Design and delivery of programs and services: In-person, phone and online client services are accessible
- Not at all
  - Slight progress
  - Moderate progress
  - High level of progress
  - Don't Know
- g. Workplace culture: Everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to make the department barrier free
- Not at all
  - Slight progress
  - Moderate progress
  - High level of progress
  - Don't Know
- h. Data, research, and analysis: ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility
- Not at all
  - Slight progress
  - Moderate progress
  - High level of progress
  - Don't Know

### **Socio-demographic questions**

12. In total, how many years have you been working at ESDC?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year to 2 years
- 3 to 10 years
- 11 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

13. What is your age group?

- 24 years and under
- 25 to 29 years
- 30 to 34 years

- 35 to 39 years
- 40 to 44 years
- 45 to 49 years
- 50 to 54 years
- 55 to 59 years
- 60 years and over

14. What is your gender?

Refers to current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents

- Woman
- Man
- Or please specify your gender (optional)
- Prefer not to say

15. Are you an Indigenous person?

An Indigenous person is a member of a First Nation, a Métis or an Inuk (Inuit). First Nations (North American Indians) include Status and Non-Status Indians

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

16. You indicated that you are an Indigenous person. If you wish to provide further details, please specify the group to which you belong

- First Nations (North American Indian)
- Métis
- Inuk (Inuit)
- Prefer not to specify

17. Are you a member of a visible minority group?

A member of a visible minority in Canada may be defined as someone (other than an Indigenous person) who is non-white in colour or race, regardless of place of birth. For example: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, or East Indian, Southeast Asian, non-white West Asian, North African or Arab, non-white Latin American, person of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups in this list), or other visible minority group

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say



18. You indicated that you are a member of a visible minority. If you wish to provide further details, please select the box(es) that apply to you. (Mark all that apply.)

- Black
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- South Asian/East Indian (including: Indian from India; Bangladeshi; Pakistani; East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad, East Africa; etc.)
- Southeast Asian (including: Burmese; Cambodian; Laotian; Thai; Vietnamese; etc.)
- Non-White West Asian, North African or Arab (including: Egyptian; Libyan; Lebanese; Iranian; etc.)
- Non-White Latin American (including: indigenous persons from Central and South America, etc.)
- Person of Mixed Origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups)
- Other Visible Minority Group
- Prefer not to specify

19. Do you identify as 2SLGBTQIA+?

Responses to this question will not be used for obligations under the *Employment Equity Act*, as 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual) are not formally identified as designated groups in the Act. The Government of Canada is committed to equal participation of these groups in the workforce and is requesting this data to better understand representation in the workforce.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

## Survey to the Employees with Disabilities Network on Accessibility Progress at ESDC

**Table 25: Question 1 - Are you a person with a disability?**

2023	2024
Yes: 171	Yes: 152
No: 14	No: 11
Prefer not to answer: 4	Prefer not to answer: 1

**Table 26: Question 2 - [If “Yes” to question 1] You indicated that you are a person with a disability. If you wish to provide further details, please select the box(es) that apply to you. (Mark all that apply.)**

2023	2024
18.9% - A mental health disability affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social / compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness	55.3% - A mental health disability affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social / compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness
16.1% - A cognitive disability affects ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication, and memory, including autism or Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities	51.3% - A cognitive disability affects ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication, and memory, including autism or Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities
13.2% - A chronic health condition or pain affects ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions	46.7% - A chronic health condition or pain affects ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions
13.0% - A sensory or environmental disability affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities	37.5% - A sensory or environmental disability affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities
11.3% - A mobility disability affects ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting your mobility	19.7% - A mobility disability affects ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting your mobility
7.8% - Challenges with flexibility or dexterity affect ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands	18.4% - Challenges with flexibility or dexterity affect ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands
5.2% - A seeing disability affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight, and visual distortion	9.2% - A seeing disability affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight, and visual distortion

4.3% - A hearing disability affects ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness, or acoustic distortion	13.1% - A hearing disability affects ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness, or acoustic distortion
3.5% - An intellectual disability affects your ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations	3.9% - An intellectual disability affects your ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations
3.3% - Another disability	9% - Another disability
1.9% - A speech disability affects ability to talk, including total speech loss, partial speech, and speech distortion	3.9% A speech disability affects ability to talk, including total speech loss, partial speech, and speech distortion
1.4% - Prefer not to specify	5.9% - Prefer not to specify

**Table 27: Question 3 - To what extent are you familiar with the ESDC Accessibility Plan?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
17.0% - Not at all	18.3% - Not at all
36.0% - To a small extent	37.8% - To a small extent
32.3% - To a moderate extent	29.9% - To a moderate extent
8.7% - To a large extent	9% - To a large extent
5.9% - To a very large extent	4% - To a very large extent
0.1% - Don't know	1% - Don't know

**Table 28: Question 4 - Do you feel that ESDC is more accessible today than it was a year ago?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
9.5% – Much less accessible	15.2% - Much less accessible
10.0% – Less accessible	9% - Less accessible
38.7% – Unchanged	38.4% - Unchanged
23.3% – More accessible	15.2% - More accessible

1.6% – Much more accessible	0% - Much more accessible
16.9% – Don't know	21.3% - Don't Know

**Table 29: Question 5 - Priority Area 1: Employment - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

2023	2024
23.3% - Not at all	23.2% - Not at all
28.0% - To a small extent	32.9% - To a small extent
21.1% - To a moderate extent	17% - To a moderate extent
6.4% - To a large extent	8% - To a large extent
3.2% - To a very large extent	3% - To a very large extent
18.0% - Don't know	15.9 % - Don't know

Desired Result: ESDC recruits and retains employees with disabilities, advances their careers, and provides timely access to workplace accommodations.

**Table 30: Question 5 - Priority Area 2: Built Environment - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

2023	2024
11.1% - Not at all	12.8% - Not at all
21.2% - To a small extent	24.4% - To a small extent
23.3% - To a moderate extent	19.5% - To a moderate extent
8.5% - To a large extent	15.8% - To a large extent
4.7% - To a very large extent	2% - To a very large extent
31.2% - Don't know	25.5% - Don't know

Desired Result: Persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to ESDC buildings, offices, and facilities.

**Table 31: Question 5 - Priority Area 3: ICT - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
11.1% - Not at all	7.3% - Not at all
26.5% - To a small extent	32.3% - To a small extent
27.0% - To a moderate extent	22.5% - To a moderate extent
12.7% - To a large extent	12% - To a large extent
2.6% - To a very large extent	4% - To a very large extent
20.1% - Don't know	21.9% - Don't know

Desired Result: Existing and new information and communication technologies products, services and content are accessible for all users.

**Table 32: Question 5 - Priority Area 4: Communication, other than ICT - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
6.9% - Not at all	3% - Not at all
23.3% - To a small extent	25.6% - To a small extent
31.2% - To a moderate extent	31% - To a moderate extent
22.2% - To a large extent	26.8% - To a large extent
5.8% - To a very large extent	6% - To a very large extent
10.6% - Don't Know	7% - Don't Know

Desired Result: ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language.

**Table 33: Question 5 - Priority Area 5: Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
11.6% - Not at all	7.3% - Not at all
17.5% - To a small extent	26.8% - To a small extent
14.3% - To a moderate extent	18.3% - To a moderate extent
6.9% - To a large extent	9.8% - To a large extent
2.6% - To a very large extent	3% - To a very large extent
47.1% - Don't know	34.8% - Don't know

Desired Result: Accessibility criteria are considered when buying goods, services and facilities, and products include accessibility features where appropriate.

**Table 34: Question 5 - Priority Area 6: Design and Delivery of Programs and Services - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
8.5% - Not at all	5.5% - Not at all
18% - To a small extent	23.2% - To a small extent
22.7% - To a moderate extent	21.3% - To a moderate extent
20.1% - To a large extent	18.3% - To a large extent
1.6% - To a very large extent	5.5% - To a very large extent
29.1% - Don't know	26.2% - Don't know

Desired Result: In-person, phone and online client services are accessible for persons with disabilities.

**Table 35: Question 5 - Priority Area 7: Workplace Culture - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

2023	2024
27.5% - Not at all	26.2% - Not at all
33.3% - To a small extent	38.4% - To a small extent
22.2% - To a moderate extent	17.7% - To a moderate extent
6.4% - To a large extent	6.7% - To a large extent
2.1% - To a very large extent	3% - To a very large extent
8.5% - Don't know	8% - Don't know

Desired Result: Everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to make the department barrier free for persons with disabilities.

**Table 36: Question 5 - Priority Area 8: Data, Research and Analysis - Listed below are each of the Priority Areas and Desired Results in the ESDC Accessibility Plan. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in each of the following areas?**

2023	2024
15.9 %- Not at all	23.4%- Not at all
29.1% - To a small extent	26.2% - To a small extent
25.9% - To a moderate extent	14.6% - To a moderate extent
6.9% - To a large extent	9% - To a large extent
1.0% - To a very large extent	2% - To a very large extent
21.2% - Don't know	24% - Don't know

Desired Result: ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

**Table 37: Question 7 - Is there a specific event, activity, policy, program, process, system (or other) that you have experienced, or that you know of, that you feel is**

**positively contributing to a more accessible ESDC for employees and/or clients with disabilities?**

2023	2024
100 responses were received and have been summarized in the Consulting our employees' section of this document (Responses to open-ended question).	84 responses were received and have been summarized in the Consulting our employees' section of this document (Responses to open-ended question).

**Table 38: Question 8 - Are there specific barriers to accessibility related to events, activities, policies, programs, processes, systems (or other) at ESDC that you have experienced? Please share in your own words.**

2023	2024
N/A for 2023. This question was not asked in the 2023 survey.	119 responses were received and have been summarized in the Consulting our employees' section of this document (Responses to open-ended question).

## Appendix B: Client consultations

### Service Canada client experience survey

The [Service Canada client experience survey 2022 to 2023](#) is conducted annually. It measures the end-to-end service experience delivered by Service Canada and tracks the impact of service delivery change on clients' ability to access the following federal programs:

- Canada Pension Plan
- Canada Pension Plan Disability
- Employment Insurance
- Old Age Security
- Social Insurance Number

### CX Survey 2022 to 2023 Findings

Among 1,012 respondents with disabilities:

- 46% reported mobility issues



- 20% had mental health challenges
- 20% had cognitive disabilities

## Annual Service Canada Client Experience Research

Qualitative research explored ways to improve service delivery. Participants were chosen based on lower satisfaction ratings from the CX Survey.

## Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Exit Surveys

VRI services are available at all Service Canada Centres and Passport Offices, offering sign language interpretation (ASL and LSQ) for Deaf or hard-of-hearing clients. After using VRI, clients can rate their experience on a 5-star scale.

- From August 1, 2023, to July 31, 2024, there were 546 VRI calls
- 304 clients completed exit surveys (55.68% response rate)
- 83.22% gave a 5-star rating
- The average rating was 4.7 out of 5

## Accessible Wayfinding in Service Canada Centres

A Lived Experience Testing Pool was used to evaluate wayfinding technology at various sites.

- 64 testers across Canada participated (88% iPhone users, 12% Android users)
- Most testers were familiar with wayfinding technology
- 70% had used BlindSquare before
- 77% often travelled independently and were willing to visit unknown locations alone

## CPPD web content review

The Chief Client Experience Office (CCXO) reviewed the [CPPD](#) eligibility information on [Canada.ca](#). They conducted 17 remote usability sessions, with 11 participants having disabilities. Each session lasted 30 to 60 minutes, where participants completed tasks and answered questions, with tasks kept short to mimic real-world use.

Overall, the usability testing concluded the following:

- the CPPD information on [Canada.ca](#) provides a satisfactory user experience
- participants tend to ignore content below the main menu on the CPPD landing page

- expandable content boxes were not effectively utilized by the participants
- content and content presentation can be improved for clarity and readability (for example, navigation labels, structure)

### CDPD Usability Testing with Persons with Disability

For the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP), which provides dental coverage to Canadians without dental benefits, the Chief Client Experience Officer (CCXO) tested the online application for accessibility. They held 15 usability sessions with participants who had various disabilities.

The usability testing showed that while participants generally understood how to apply, they encountered challenges in specific sections. The testing also revealed several accessibility issues with the following recommendations:

- direct mobile screen reader users to the top of the page upon loading
- improve the “date of birth” field experience for screen reader users
- ensure all action buttons are correctly labelled for screen readers
- make sure the progress tracker is readable by screen readers
- ensure bolded text is not misinterpreted as a separate sentence by screen readers
- fix the issue where screen readers repeatedly read the descriptive information for each input section

## Appendix C: Draft feedback framework

Since 2022, ESDC has been gathering feedback from employees and the public about accessibility barriers in the department. However, the lack of a unified approach to this feedback has created gaps in understanding these issues. To address this, ESDC is creating a framework to organize and track all feedback on accessibility. This will help us comply with the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and stay accountable, transparent, and focused on improving accessibility.

### What is accessibility feedback

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) requires regulated entities like ESDC to have a process for collecting feedback on 2 main things:

- how the organization is implementing its accessibility plan

- the barriers faced by the organization's employees and clients who interact with it

While ESDC already has a process in place for collecting this feedback, we are also receiving more and more feedback about accessibility and barriers through other mechanisms.

For this framework, “accessibility feedback” is defined as any information that identifies a barrier for a person with a disability.

## **Feedback management framework**

The feedback framework is designed to manage all accessibility-related feedback, not just what’s collected through regulated processes. It sets guidelines for retaining feedback and tracking progress.

### **Collect feedback on accessibility barriers**

- Collect feedback through multiple channels for feedback collection such as online forms, surveys, email, phone calls, and in-person meetings/service interactions
- Ensure all channels are accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Ensure ease of access and user-friendliness for submitting feedback (no wrong door)
- Promote the availability of feedback channels through accessible means, including outreach to disability organizations and communities
- Acknowledge receipt of feedback in the way it was provided
- Ensure an option for anonymous feedback is available

### **Organize feedback by priority area**

- Designate a team responsible for managing and reviewing feedback
- Categorize feedback based on priority areas outlined in the Plan
- Develop common procedures for organizing feedback
- Apply retention periods based on requirements and organizational needs

### **Analyze feedback for actionable insights**

- Organize feedback data from various channels into a centralized system
- Analyze measurable data to identify trends, frequency of issues, and areas of concern
- Review qualitative feedback to understand specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and gather insights for improvement
- Analyze feedback trends to identify recurring issues and prioritize them for resolution

- Utilize data analytics tools to gain insights from feedback data

### **Prioritize actions, set targets, and monitor progress**

- Allocate resources and assign accountability for addressing feedback items
- Implement a systematic approach to resolving feedback with timelines
- Develop action plans to address identified accessibility barriers, incorporating feedback-driven actions into existing policies, processes, and practices. Some feedback can be addressed right away, while other feedback may need to be included into the next iteration of the accessibility plan

### **Implement actions to address the feedback**

- Implement a monitoring system to track the progress of resolution efforts
- Generate regular reports on feedback resolution
- Use key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of feedback management processes
- Implement changes based on feedback and performance data

### **Communicate and report actions to prevent future barriers and close the loop with the person who provided feedback**

- Implement changes based on feedback and performance data
- Communicate progress and updates to clients and staff regarding their feedback
- Ensure transparency in reporting by sharing feedback summaries and actions with relevant stakeholders, including clients with disabilities and advocacy groups and in the annual ESDC Progress Reports

## **Application and Implementation**

### **Phase 1: Regulatory requirements**

This feedback management framework will apply to feedback received through the [regulated processes](#), outlined for the public and employees, published within ESDC's Accessibility Plan, including feedback received through the feedback page, feedback forms, emails, and telephone.

## Phase 2: No wrong door

In addition to the regulated processes for collecting accessibility feedback in the aim of adopting a “no wrong door” approach, this framework will also apply to other input sources collecting feedback related to accessibility such as, but not limited to:

- channel feedback questionnaires
- employees with disabilities network surveys
- corporate surveys on accessibility
- other sources of ad hoc feedback

Starting in 2025, ESDC will collect and analyze feedback from all sources to find ways to remove and prevent barriers for clients and employees with disabilities. We will create standard operating procedures for managing feedback and tracking how issues are resolved, ensuring everyone in the department follows the same process. This plan will help us respond better to accessibility concerns and keep improving our services and workplace.