Department of Finance Canada
Ministère des Finances Canada

Accessibility Progress Report 2023

Canada

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Introduction

The [Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) provides a vision and framework for how the public service can identify, prevent and remove physical, systemic and cultural obstacles to the participation of persons with disabilities. Its aim is to create the most accessible public service in the world – an environment where persons with disabilities can flourish. When persons with disabilities in the public service can focus on their work and their service to Canadians, instead of combatting the systems and structures that keep them marginalized, all Canadians can benefit.

The strategy was developed following the passage of the *[Accessible Canada Act](#)* (the Act), which received Royal Assent in July 2019, and sets expectations for the achievement of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. It seeks to:

- Enforce the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers for organizations under federal jurisdiction including departments such as the Department of Finance Canada; and

- Ensure the full participation in society of persons with physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairments.

The Act requires all regulated entities, including federal organizations such as the Department of Finance Canada, to:

- Develop and publish an accessibility action plan. The plan needs to be created in consultation with people with disabilities. The plan must outline the strategies for improving and meeting legal accessibility duties. These plans are to be published publicly and updated every three years or sooner;

- Implement a process to receive and respond to feedback on accessibility and on the plan itself in a timely manner; and

- Publish annual progress reports in consultation with people with disabilities to communicate progress made against the plan and address feedback received.

The Department of Finance at a glance

The Department of Finance Canada has 936 active employees as of December 1, 2023. The Department is responsible for the overall stewardship of the Canadian economy, helps the Government of Canada develop and implement strong and sustainable economic, fiscal, tax, social, security, international and financial sector policies and programs that reflect Canadian values, and ensures that the federal government is supported by high quality advice. A deep-seated connection exists between the Department and work on accessibility. In fulfilling its requirements under the *[Accessible Canada Act](#)*, the Department has the opportunity to implement meaningful change and deliver on its strategic outcomes.

General

Departmental feedback process

A feedback process is in place at the Department of Finance Canada. Individuals can submit feedback relating to accessibility and its Accessibility Action Plan through various channels, including email, phone and mail. Feedback can either be provided with an identified contact or anonymously. Acknowledgement receipt and responses will only be provided if contact information is provided.

Receipt of acknowledgement of feedback will be provided within two weeks of its successful delivery to the designated organizational contact and will be provided by the same channel in which the feedback was received. Please note that anonymous feedback submissions will be treated equally to those submitted by an identified person.

All feedback will be taken into consideration during the publication of annual progress reports on the implementation of this Plan and in the renewal of the Plan.

Feedback contact

Director, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessiblity
Email address: octavia.james@fin.gc.ca
Phone number: 1-833-712-2292, TTY: 613-369-3230
Mailing address: 90 Elgin Street, room 10-108, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E1

Other formats

Contact us to request alternate formats of this Plan such as large print, braille, or audio at accessibility.accessibilite@fin.gc.ca

Executive summary

The Department of Finance Canada developed its first Accessibility Action Plan as an important first step towards realizing the *Accessible Canada Act*'s commitment to creating a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

The Department is committed to proactively eliminating and preventing barriers faced by persons with disabilities and ensuring greater opportunities for all. This Plan provides a strong foundation for the work that lies ahead to make the organization inclusive by design and accessible by default. This is the Department's first Annual Progress Report on its Accessibility Action Plan.

The Department's Plan identifies barriers to accessibility in seven key areas identified under the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- Employment;
- Built Environment;
- Information and communication technologies (ICT);
- Communications other than ICT;
- Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods; and
- Culture.
- *Transportation

*The Act's recommended transportation pillar was previously not included in the Department's 2022 Accessibility Action Plan, however it is now included in the 2023 Accessibility Progress report.

Accessibility statement

The commitments and activities related to the "design and delivery of programs and services" key area are reflected under other key areas identified for the Department.

This Progress Report will provide an update on the actions taken during this past year that were proposed in the Department's Accessibility Action Plan – what has been completed and what its commitments are in the years ahead to implement and deliver the plan with clear timelines to be accountable for each of the seven key identified areas.

In addition, the Department is continuing its work to implement two overarching enabling activities that will provide the foundational framework required to improve accessibility:

- Government of Canada (GC) Workplace Accessibility Passport
- The Workplace Accommodation Centre

GC Workplace Accessibility Passport

The Department was an early adopter of the passport and continues to promote its use to managers and employees. The passport helps address obstacles that federal public service employees and applicants with disabilities face in obtaining the tools and supports needed to perform at their best and succeed in the workplace. This tool was designed to travel with the employees throughout their federal public service career, reducing the need to renegotiate workplace supports when employees change jobs.

Update 2023

TBS continues with the development of the digital version of the Accessibility Passport with a targeted launch date of early 2024. Once the digital version is finalized, the Department will fully implement it to provide data on usage for reporting tracking purposes only. The Department will also continue to provide further training to all managers and employees on the use of the passport – not just those who identify as persons with disabilities, to promote its full use and to help remove the stigma against those with disabilities.

The Workplace Accommodation Centre

This Workplace Accommodation Centre is a collaborative pilot program between the Department and the Treasury Board Secretariat. The Centre is implementing a centralized and neutral case management model for requests for accommodations that will provide services to all employees who request an accommodation, and not exclusively employees who have self-identified as a person with a disability. The approach is expected to:

- Streamline workplace accommodation practices;
- Improve employees' experiences;
- Facilitate the accommodation process for managers;
- Make expert guidance on accessibility readily available; and
- Support a "yes by default" culture.

Update 2023

TBS continues with the development of the Workplace Accommodation Centre for its employees however, due to resource constraints, adopting the Department of Finance into a Shared Workplace Accommodation Centre was not feasible for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Discussions are still proceeding before moving ahead with a Shared Accommodation Centre for both Departments. If the decision is to move forward, the targeted onboarding date for the Department will be during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Employment

Objective

Job seekers and current employees with disabilities see the Department of Finance Canada as an employer of choice and can contribute at their full potential through access to employment opportunities and career advancement in a hybrid workplace.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Put accommodation measures in place more promptly;
- Simplify documentation requirements (medical reports and specialist opinions);
- Avoid having to repeat the accommodation process with every change in position;
- Reduce obstacles for accommodation requests;
- Ensure selection processes and assessment tools are created with accessibility needs in mind at the onset;
- Encourage and promote from within the Department through the use of talent management plans and mentoring;
- Increase awareness of disability inclusion policies to make sure everyone has the same opportunities for advancement; and
- Provide additional assistance in preparing for promotions.

Short-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Design and implement recruiting and talent strategies to hire, develop and retain more persons with disabilities (and close the representation gap).
- Implement a departmental mentorship program focused on supporting equity groups.
- Revise current accessibility processes to eliminate barriers to access and align them with accessibility standards (including but not limited to the 'Tell Us Once' principal).

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Identify and communicate departmental and cross-government training and awareness programs related to disability inclusion and accessibility to all employees (e.g., formal training, speaker sessions) to raise awareness and combat unconscious bias.
- Review organizational policies and processes, including recruitment and onboarding, with a pan-disability lens to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming workplace for persons with disabilities.

Update 2023

Implemented

- Established department wide hiring goals for persons with disabilities for both EX and non-EX that is being monitored at both the branch and department level. These targets take into account the organization's goal to have a workforce representative of the workforce availability (WFA) and the public service's commitment to hire 5,000 net new persons with disabilities.

- Implementation of Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) changes that include assessment of bias and barriers in evaluation tools for staffing included:

  - Upskilling hiring managers on bias and barriers in the staffing process through training. Mandatory completion of *Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce (COR120)* to be eligible for subdelegation of authorities in staffing as well as manager information sessions on the changes to the PSEA.

  - Documenting assessment of bias and barriers in evaluation tools and mitigating actions undertaken is in place.

- Duty to Accommodate – yes by default, "white glove service", Labour Relations refers to AAACT, Facilities and IT as needed, depending on request.

- Accessibility Ambassador Network – share knowledge of Personnel Psychology Centre (PPC) as the Subject Matter Expert on staffing accommodations to each department to offload some requests to PPC which allows faster resolutions.

- A successful pilot project in partnership with LiveWorkPlay has been completed which resulted in the indeterminate employment of the program participant.

In Progress

- Mentorship and Sponsorship programs - focused on supporting equity groups.

- Workplace Accommodation Centre – discussions continue with TBS regarding onboarding FIN to the TBS WAC, set for next fiscal year if decision to move forward.

- Accessibility Passport – digital platform has been demonstrated with expected launch date early 2024. Training for managers and employees will follow.

- Plan for further collaboration with LiveWorkPlay for additional employment opportunities and ongoing support of the initiative by FIN employees through awareness sessions and mentoring.

- Continued participation in career fairs geared toward persons with disabilities.

- Ongoing assessment and consideration of best practices in inclusive and accessible staffing.

The built environment

Objective

Clients and employees of the Department, including those with disabilities, can make best use of its facilities through barrier-free access.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure ramps are in place at ground-level access points and regular maintenance occurs in all seasons.
- Halls, doorways, and security gates must be wide enough to pass through in a wheelchair, with room for work materials and other assistive devices.
- Elevator doors must allow time for people with restricted mobility and low vision to enter and exit.
- Automatic door openers need to be in place and maintained, with temporary solutions in place when out of order.
- Temporary circulation routes that are put in place due to maintenance or construction must take accessibility into account.
- Ensure qualitative and experiential elements of a healthy workplace such as lighting, noise levels and decor are in place.
- Designated accessibility-friendly space and seating room should exist in gathering and meeting spaces, especially for large scale events.
- Motion detection-based automatic lighting systems cause painful interference with hearing aids.
- Furnishings with static positioning only fit certain people, so adjustable furniture is preferable.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Create a standard accessibility checklist to monitor and evaluate the accessibility of workspaces on an ongoing basis. Include a strategy to integrate this checklist into existing accommodation processes with a clear roadmap for delivery of these services.
- Develop an approved product catalogue that is regularly updated with new office furniture, fixtures and component product upgrades and adaptations. Include an accessible delivery plan for these accommodations.
- Communicate availability of Automatic Door Operators key card programming.

Longer-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Review emergency procedures for accessibility and include alternative supports for persons with disabilities (employees and visitors). Assess the experience of persons with disabilities during practice drills.

Update 2023

Implemented

- Halls, doorways, and security gate widths meet accessibility criteria.

In Progress

- Creation of Accessibility Checklist.
- Review emergency procedures for accessibility and include alternative supports for persons with disabilities (employees and visitors).
- Automatic door openers - item is being included as part of Accessibility Checklist.
- New Facilities InfoSite page – being designed to include a furniture section with a description of furniture items available.
- Barrier-free access points diagram for employees and visitors – in progress to help navigate the building.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Objective

Information and communications technology provides all users, including those with disabilities, with leading edge tools that enhance capacity and improve efficiency.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure awareness of new and emerging accessible and enabling technology is up to date and that this information reaches a wide audience.
- Ensure adaptive technologies like speech recognition software are readily available.
- Regularly update internal digital systems as new accessibility technologies emerge.
- Reduce wait times for GC-wide support services like Shared Services Canada's (SSC's) Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program.
- Ensure catalogue of accessibility functions and assistive technology is available and reaches its target audience.
- Increase awareness of readily available training or assistance.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Provide guidance to frontline IT staff on supporting and communicating with persons with disabilities as it relates to setting up assistive technology. Defining the subset of staff that need training will be the Department's first-step priority.
- Build in accessibility from the start when developing new IT solutions and services by engaging employees who self-identify as persons with disabilities in design and testing.
- Leverage SSC's AAACT team to test solutions with a broad range of adaptive technologies when possible.

Longer-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Enable accessibility features on all devices provided by SSC.
- Assess accessibility of the Department's existing digital assets and develop remediation plans (e.g., intranet, technology platforms, videoconferencing technologies, ticketing system).
- Work with stakeholders and SSC's AAACT to build the Department's inventory and procurement processes for adaptive technologies.

Update 2023

Implemented

- Speech recognition software can be requested and installed when required.
- M365 accessibility features are partially enabled, where possible.
- Some adaptive technology is readily available to employees.
- Core digital systems are kept up to date with vendor releases - includes operating system and core productivity tools.
- Assess accessibility of the Department's existing digital assets and develop remediation plans (e.g., intranet, technology platforms, videoconferencing) - the procurement process is understood and followed for adaptive technologies (AAACT team is engaged for feedback on all adaptive technology requests).

In progress

- Enabling accessibility features in hardware and software provided to employees - IT staff documentation and training will be provided to ensure familiarization with options and features available - which in turn, will reduce wait times and offer service delivery in a timely fashion.
- Minimal IT solutions currently being developed by the Department - some implementations of SSC/TBS provided solutions.
- Frontline IT staff aware of processes and tools available for training and assistance. Additional effort to familiarize the staff with the content and catalog of tools to be done in short term.
- No new IT solution initiatives being developed at this time. Accessibility to be considered for new initiatives.
- Publish available adaptive tools on InfoSite.
- Analysis of available features of new and emerging technologies (including enabling accessibility features on all devices provided by SSC) and steps to implement are not yet in place.

Communications other than ICT

Objective

Make all communications accessible and inclusive for the public and employees.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure information is always accessible to all employees.
- Consistently provide transcripts and captioning for presentations, meetings and videos.
- Ensure documents and templates created internally are always fully accessible.
- Ensure departmental events and activities are always inclusive and accessible to all employees.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Enable live captioning option in MS Teams for employee use during meetings and/or provide transcripts of meeting minutes afterwards.
- Provide training and guidance to all employees to better understand accessible communication techniques (including plain language writing) and incorporate inclusive practices during larger meetings and events.

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Obtain additional funding and resources to support accessibility for internal and external large events and meetings.
- Include/improve consistent live captioning in both official languages during large meetings and events.
- Create an internal repository (e.g., on intranet) for accessibility educational resources including compliance guidelines, accommodations support, disability awareness training, best practices and other key information.
- Develop relationships with accessible communication providers to use when needed (e.g., American Sign Language (ASL), Quebec Sign Language (QSL) and Indigenous sign languages).

Update 2023

Implemented

- Enabled live captioning option in MS Teams for employees to use during meetings.
- Communicated new accessibility tools to Finance employees through InfoSite as well as InfoBulletin (May, June, July).
- Guidance has been developed to support employees to create accessible documents and are being promoted to employees. This is the first step in establishing an Accessibility Hub on our InfoSite.

- Guidance for employees to better understand accessible communication techniques (i.e. plain language writing) are in development.
- An InfoSite page is in development that will serve as a single source of information for guidance to employees on accessible communication, accessibility tools and training opportunities.
- Outreach to accessible communication providers (i.e. American Sign Language, Quebec Sign Language and Indigenous Sign Languages)

Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods

Objective

Ensure the procurement and material management team and project authorities consider accessibility requirements in their specifications for procuring services, goods, and services related to goods, so that the deliverables provide the necessary accessibility features.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Involve persons with disabilities early in the procurement process.
- Simplify the process for procuring the services of external service providers.
- Ensure supplier diversity information is available during the procurement process.
- Ensure templates and documents used in procurement processes are always accessible.
- Consistently use accessibility assessment criteria in the evaluation process.
- Streamline the accommodations process for suppliers.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Implement a mechanism for communicating the Department's commitment to accessibility and information about the accommodations process to suppliers.
- Review the procurement process, including documents, forms, templates and communications, to ensure accessible practices are reflected.

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Provide accessibility guidance on leading practices for accessible procurement to the procurement team and project authorities and on interacting/communicating with suppliers with disabilities.
- Consistently implement accessibility assessment criteria with the project authorities as part of the evaluation of all procured goods and services.

Update 2023

In progress

- Review of the procurement process to ensure accessible practices are reflected.
- Consistent implementation of accessibility assessment criteria with the project authorities as part of the evaluation of all procured goods and services.
- Providing accessibility guidance on leading practices for accessible procurement to the procurement team and project authorities and on interacting/communicating with suppliers with disabilities.
- Implement a mechanism for communicating the Department's commitment to accessibility and information about the accommodations process to suppliers.

Culture change towards disability inclusion

Objective

Accessibility is integrated into the everyday business of the Department of Finance Canada.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Provide information and training including unconscious bias training as it relates to accessibility.
- Increase the representation of persons with disabilities at the management level.
- Provide guidance, training and advance preparation to enable employees who provide policy advice on services to meet clients' accessibility needs.
- Conduct consultations when designing accessible policies, services and programs.

Update 2023

Implemented

- New Team created for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility.
- Raise awareness about the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act* - including presentations from thought leaders in disability.
- Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion.
- Providing ongoing training for employees and managers – ensuring content also includes persons with disabilities.
- Continue to work with Human Resources to find ways to extend employment opportunities to persons with disabilities via entities such as *Live, Work, Play*.
- Continue to promote upcoming special events to bring awareness to accessibility.

- Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion.

- Providing ongoing training for employees and managers.

- Continue to work with Human Resources to find ways to extend employment opportunities to persons with disabilities via entities such as *Live, Work, Play*.

- Continue to promote upcoming special events to bring awareness to accessibility.

- Working with employees with disabilities - to better integrate the "Nothing Without Us" principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices.

- In the process of merging the FIN and TBS Accessibility Networks together to allow for greater representation and voice for Finance employees.

Transportation

Objective

The Transportation pillar was not included in the Department of Finance Canada Accessibility Plan 2022-2025, however the Department recognizes its importance to all employees while traveling for work. The Department of Finance Canada is committed to ensuring all accessibility requirements for employees and managers are met while traveling for business.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Employees traveling for business are not guaranteed accessible hotels and other venues due to differences in international standards and age of buildings in certain locations around the world.

- Traveling employees from other departments have come across major barriers when traveling by air and other methods of transportation.

Update 2023

Although the Department is unable to control how private sector transportation and hotel companies are set up for all accessibility needs, the Department will ensure questions are asked during booking hotels for traveling employees and managers that the venues and local transportation are accessible and meets accommodation requirements.

- The use of Access Now and other accessibility tools/apps/websites will assist in future recommendations for hotels, restaurants, transportation and other venues for the travelling employees in advance of their trip.

Consultations

A co-development model inspired the approach for drafting the Plan. The Finance Accessibility Network, formed in 2022, facilitated experience-based conversations, and was provided the opportunity to comment throughout the development.

Additionally, the Department's Accessibility Action Plan was informed by a broad range of feedback and input. These include:

- Discussions with accessibility pillar leads;
- An internal accessibility survey;
- Collaboration with other federal departments; and
- Consultations with external subject matter advisors.

The Department will continue to consult with the Finance Accessibility Network and will ensure that persons with disabilities contribute to all decision-making related to the commitments made in this Plan. Progress reports and future action plans will be guided by the principle of 'Nothing Without Us', recognizing that persons with disabilities will guide efforts to build an inclusive federal public service that is more innovative, efficient and productive.

Feedback

The consultations leading up to the publication of the Accessibility Action Plan focused on listening to accounts of personal experience. In listening to these messages, some common themes emerged over time:

- Centralize tools, information, and resources;
- Educate and raise awareness on accessibility inclusion;
- Foster a culture of accessibility;
- Reduce delays in equipping persons with disabilities with the tools they require to do their work;
- Ensure that persons with disabilities are involved in decision-making regarding accessibility moving forward; and
- Leverage governance committees to advocate for disability and accessibility inclusion.

Key commitments moving forward (2024-25)

- Raise awareness about the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*, including the realization of a barrier-free Canada, culture change, standards development, and monitoring and reporting

- Work with employees with disabilities to better integrate the Nothing Without Us principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices.

- Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion focused on knowledge sharing to build a disability-confident workforce.

- Leverage and strengthen Departmental governance committees to foster culture change.

- Create a working group consisting of employees with disabilities and accessibility pillar leads to:

  o develop a results framework and implementation plan; and

  o monitor progress and advance accessibility awareness and engagement activities within the Department.

- Create new tools and structures to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in the delivery of internal and external services.

Update 2023

There is no current Accessibility Network at the Department. This has meant low employee participation in plan implementation. To reach a state where we can be true to the 'nothing about us, without us' means finding root causes and then solutions for the state of participation. Some initial steps involve partnering with other departments that have matured in this area, providing neutral employee support for disability management and making the best use possible of thought-leaders in the area of disability.

Glossary

Accessibility
The degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all.

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 equipment or tools, flexible work hours or job-sharing, relocation of the workspace, the ability to work from home, reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks for others, or 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.

Barrier
Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal. (Source: Bill C-81: *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*)

Disability
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: Bill C-81: *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*)

Disability type
A form of limitation, be it physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory or other. In its 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada used screening questions to identify the following 10 types of disability: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, mental health-related, and memory. The screening questionnaire also contained a question concerning any other health problem or condition that has lasted or is expected to last for six months or more. This question was meant to be a catch-all in case the 10 disability types did not cover the respondent's situation. This question is associated with an 11th "unknown" disability type.

Employee
A person employed by the Department of Finance Canada.

Persons with disabilities
Persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or b) believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment. Persons with disabilities include persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace. (Source: *Employment Equity Act*)

Self-identification
Employees providing employment equity information for statistical purposes in analyzing and monitoring the progress of employment equity groups in the federal public service and for reporting on workforce representation. (Source: *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018*)

Workforce availability

For the core public administration, refers to the estimated availability of people in designated groups as a percentage of the workforce population. For the core public administration, workforce availability is based on the population of Canadian citizens who are active in the workforce and work in those occupations that correspond to the occupations in the core public administration. Availability is estimated from 2011 Census data. Estimates for persons with disabilities are derived from data, also collected by Statistics Canada, in the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. (Source: *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018*)