



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

# Accessibility Plan Progress Report 2024



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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et Citoyenneté Canada

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## Message from the Deputy Ministers of IRCC

We are pleased to present Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) 2024 Accessibility Progress Report.

The achievements outlined in this report hinge on the collaborative efforts across all levels of our organization in delivering on our accessibility plan. We are thankful for the ongoing engagement demonstrated by IRCC employees to break down barriers and foster an inclusive environment for all.

This work would not be possible without IRCC's employee-driven Persons with Disabilities Network, which is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Network continues to act as the voice of persons with disabilities in the department and to advocate for their equal participation in the workplace.

We strongly believe every employee at IRCC brings unique perspectives and experiences, and that all voices should be heard. This belief, and the ways that we implement it with our actions, is key to building trust and fostering a safe workplace culture where employees feel valued and respected. In turn, this can only have a positive impact on how services are delivered to the clients and communities IRCC serves. This will contribute to realizing IRCC's vision to be a department where people can expect barrier-free and accessible services.

We will continue to build on our successes, to learn and adjust as we move forward on the path to create a Canada without barriers by 2040.

Thank you,



Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar  
Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



Scott Harris  
Associate Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



## Executive Summary

As required under the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA), IRCC published its first [Accessibility Plan](#) in December 2022 and first [Progress Report](#) one year later.

As IRCC's second progress report, this document features the progress made and challenges encountered in 2024 as the department addressed barriers to accessibility in the nine priority areas listed in the plan. These priority areas include the seven areas set out under the ACA, as well as two additional priority areas identified by IRCC: accommodation and culture. This report also describes how IRCC kept with its obligations to consult with persons with disabilities and to collect and process feedback on accessibility.

## Progress

IRCC showed progress in several key areas, including where the department:

- Reached and surpassed the Employment Equity representation baseline objective of 9.5% for persons with disabilities.
- Launched a second language training pilot with the goal to ensure an equitable and efficient level of support for employees with disabilities, particularly those with learning disabilities.
- Released the Microsoft Office 365 suite department wide, offering expanded and improved accessibility features for all.
- Launched the department's first Accessibility Learning working group to streamline efforts related to accessibility learning needs across all priority areas.
- Secured a service contract to provide American Sign Language (ASL), Quebec Sign Language (LSQ) and options for Indigenous sign languages interpretation for public opinion research.
- Continued to deliver accessibility improvements to the built environment. For example, across regional offices, implementation of all-access washrooms is at 90% completion and installation of automatic door openers at 100%.



## Challenges

IRCC has encountered some challenges, including the following:

- Attitudinal barriers and their impacts on persons with disabilities continue to be an issue, reiterating the need for actions aimed at operating a mindset shift across IRCC and to foster a safe workplace environment.
- Need to further develop IRCC's departmental accessibility framework to:
  - ▷ encourage accountability
  - ▷ clarify responsibilities
  - ▷ provide guidance on how to include accessibility considerations in the review and design of both employee and client related policies and programs
- The updated [Directive on prescribed presence in the workplace](#), which impacted employees with disabilities requiring accommodations. The Employee Support Office saw an increase of 60% in requests for support from 2023, hindering the team's capacity to provide timely services.
- Delay in conducting further accessibility assessments of IRCC's physical spaces and in identifying locations for modernization projects. This is a result of the updated return to office mandate, which increased workspace needs and led to a review of long-term plans for space allocations by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC).
- While elements of progress are being reported, lack of dedicated funding and resources has limited the scope of accessibility initiatives and progress made under several priority areas this year, with the most direct impact on the Programs and Services priority area. Moving forward, lack of sustainable funding is expected to impact the department's capacity to further deliver on commitments to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities, in all priority areas.



## General

### About Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

IRCC is responsible for overseeing immigration, refugee protection, citizenship, and passport services. Its primary role is to facilitate the arrival and integration of immigrants, protect refugees, promote Canadian citizenship values, and manage passport issuance. The department also develops policies and programs to support Canada's economic growth and humanitarian commitments while ensuring the safety and security of Canadians. Additional information on the department's [raison d'être, mission and vision](#) can be found online.

### Contact Us

IRCC will gladly receive feedback and questions on this report, the [accessibility plan](#) or any other matter related to accessibility. Anyone may contact the IRCC Accessibility Officer to:

- Provide feedback or ask questions.
- Request this progress report and/or the description of our feedback process in an alternate format including print, large print, braille, audio, or electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology.

### Contact Information

Address: c/o IRCC Accessibility Officer  
365 Laurier Ave West  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1  
CANADA

Telephone number: 1-833-411-6166 or 613-437-6949

Email address: [IRCC.Accessibility-Accessibilite.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.Accessibility-Accessibilite.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)

Online: [Accessibility feedback form](#)





## Context

As prescribed under the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA), IRCC published its first [Accessibility Plan](#) in December 2022. The plan identifies barriers to accessibility in the department, and actions to take over a period of three years to address these barriers, in the priority areas set out under the ACA:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies
- communications
- procurement of goods, services, and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services, and
- transportation

IRCC also included two additional overarching priority areas in its plan:

- accommodation
- culture

This report features progress made, and challenges encountered in the second year of implementation of IRCC's accessibility plan. Efforts made in the first year were presented in IRCC's first [Accessibility Progress Report](#) published in December 2023.





## Priority Areas – Progress and Challenges

In the second year of implementing its accessibility plan, IRCC continued to invest efforts towards planned actions to address barriers in all priority areas. This report highlights progress made in 2024 on commitments outlined in our plan, and other initiatives across IRCC, as well as challenges being faced in the department's journey to become equitable by design and accessible by default.

### Employment

IRCC continues to be committed in becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. The department's focus remains on creating a healthy, barrier-free workplace and implementing initiatives to attract and retain employees with disabilities. This includes addressing barriers in the hiring process and providing managers with tools and guidance to better support employees with disabilities, manage performance and help with career development.

### Progress

#### Commitment: Accessible Hiring Metrics (and Support for Managers)

To promote and reinforce positive actions related to accessibility, IRCC committed to add metrics to management performance agreements and to provide support to managers. To achieve this, IRCC has:

- Launched phase 1 of an Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ARDEI) Index Pilot Program for Director General Level and above in March 2024:
  - ▷ As part of existing performance management, executives are evaluated on their ARDEI performance based on workforce representation rates and employee feedback.
  - ▷ This includes supporting the recruitment, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities, and promoting and providing accessibility-friendly programs, tools and services.
  - ▷ Following a review of the first phase of the pilot which assessed the methodologies in producing the indexes for executives, the pilot program is being reviewed by senior management.
- Developed a new Anti-Racism and Inclusion (ARI) competency unique to IRCC. This competency supports the departmental commitment to be more inclusive for everyone, fostering a safe and equitable workplace culture that values diversity and encourages active efforts towards a culture of respect and inclusion:
  - ▷ The new competency was piloted in 2024 with executive non-advertised appointments.
  - ▷ Expected to be implemented to all selection process in late 2024.



- Developed and launched an onboarding checklist and toolkit for managers available internally on the Rise platform through the department’s intranet. It includes a guide designed to provide managers with tools to onboard persons with disabilities, featuring information on best practices, disabilities, and barriers, as well as how to identify and support accommodation needs:
  - ▷ This toolkit will help in raising awareness of accessibility throughout our organization and in creating a respectful and barrier-free department.
  
- Developed an orientation strategy to be launched in 2025. The strategy will include an orientation platform accessible through the Employee’s Corner on the intranet:
  - ▷ It will provide new employees with essential information on the department’s values and culture through short videos.
  - ▷ The strategy will also include a New Employee Microsoft Teams group for peer support and real-time collaboration, along with short surveys to collect feedback at key stages of the onboarding process.
    - ▶ These key deliverables within the orientation strategy will be introduced gradually and they will aim to increase employee confidence, knowledge and productivity, as well as improve retention, and ensure a consistent, accessible experience for all new employees.

**Other Initiatives – Recruitment & Retention**

**Recruitment**

IRCC maintained efforts to contribute to the federal government’s goal of hiring 5000 net-new persons with disabilities (PwD) by 2025 through various recruitment initiatives.

As a result, IRCC made great progress and has now reached its employment equity (EE) representation baseline objective of 9.5%. The table below presents data on growth of PwD representation within IRCC.

Date	PwD Representation % (Number)	Gap
April 2021	4.1% (318)	-415
October 2023	8.8% (1,052)	-84
September 2024	9.9% (1,204)	48



IRCC's 2024 recruitment initiatives included the following:

- Participated in 4 university career fairs, focused on connecting with students and graduates from the PwD community, during which IRCC:
  - ▷ promoted inclusive hiring practices
  - ▷ provided information on accessibility support
  - ▷ highlighted opportunities to candidates
- Established new connections with external organisations to explore potential partnership for accessing PwD talent within their network.
- Conducted an information session with the Canadian Council for Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) to promote IRCC as an employer of choice, emphasizing the department's commitment to addressing EE gaps, with a specific focus on increasing PwD representation at the mid-management level.
- Held 2 focus group sessions with a total of 49 participants from equity-seeking groups to identify barriers, solutions, and best practices to reduce bias and facilitate career advancement to middle manager levels within IRCC. The data collected was used in the preparation of an internal staffing process.
- Launched an internal staffing process for EE groups for decision maker (PM-3) positions. The process is intended to act as feeder to middle manager group. Since the launch in June 2024:
  - ▷ 2,006 applications were received, 154 (8%) of which have self-identified as a PwD
  - ▷ 979 applicants have advanced to the next stage, 108 (11%) of which are PwD
  - ▷ process should be finalized in early 2025



- Launched IRCC’s participation in the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) “Specific Name Referral Pilot Project,” allowing managers to request referrals for students based on EE self-declaration, including students with disabilities:
  - ▷ Through this pilot, students were referred from various EE groups including PwDs.

## Retention

IRCC believes that identifying the reasons why employees with disabilities leave the department will help in uncovering factors or strategies to improve the retention of PwD in its workforce. To start gathering data, IRCC has:

- Developed and launched the Departure and Exit Survey Dashboard in July 2024. The tool was designed to:
  - ▷ Utilize data from the demographics section of the existing Employee Exit Survey, which was updated in early 2024.
  - ▷ Allow to track and analyze trends in departures among EE groups, including PwD.
  - ▷ Help provide a clearer understanding of the employee departure rates.
  - ▷ Support management in developing effective employee retention strategies, therefore promoting a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Other initiatives to support career development and retention of IRCC employees:

- In May 2024, launched the IRCC Talent Bank, a personnel mobility database, which includes a self-declaration function:
  - ▷ Information sessions were delivered to EE groups, including PwD, to help employees make informed decisions about using the platform. The sessions provided info on context and purpose, an in-depth walkthrough of questions to create a profile and an explanation of benefits and uses of self-declaration in the context of the database.
- Second language training pilot launched in fall of 2024 by IRCC’s Learning Academy, with a focus on providing support to employees with learning disabilities:
  - ▷ In partnership with the IRCC Employee Support Office (ESO), IRCC’s Learning Academy instructors have developed and implemented tools to assess accommodation needs to ensure equitable and efficient level of support for employees with disabilities attending second language coaching sessions or second language training courses. As part of this pilot project, teachers are also researching and acquiring expertise on learning disabilities.



## Challenges

In the context of the government's announcement on refocusing spending, IRCC has reduced its staffing activities including external outreach. In addition, external PwD talent pipeline such as the High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities Program was paused for 2024-2025. Despite the current context, IRCC strives to continue to increase the representation of PwD in the department.

As we focus more attention on our existing workforce, IRCC remains conscious that:

- Attitudinal barriers and ableism in the workplace remain important barriers faced by PwD in the area of employment.
- PwD are more likely to feel stressed, have poor mental health and suffer discrimination at work than other employees in the department (as per the [Public Service Employee Survey 2022 – data on IRCC population](#)).
- It was brought up in the focus group discussions held this year in relation to hiring, that PwD are more likely to be included in a pool of qualified candidates without being offered opportunities after qualifying. Research is needed to identify supporting data.
- Many employees likely remain reluctant to self-identify as PwD and to request accommodation out of fear of being judged and stigmatized, with potential impacts on their career development in the department.

IRCC would benefit from having a more accurate portrait of PwD representation in the department to:

- better understand and respond to the needs of our employees, and in turn
- positively impact retention rates

IRCC has been anticipating the launch of a modernized Self-Identification (Self-ID) Questionnaire and application by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) and is ready to implement a department-wide strategy to highlight the benefits of self-identifying and build trust in the new questionnaire and platform. IRCC expects that completion rates of employees who self-ID as PwD may increase because of this campaign and the ongoing initiatives to raise awareness and promote disability inclusion in the department.



## Built Environment

IRCC works continuously with various partners to enhance the accessibility in our worksites and client-facing offices across Canada. In year two of IRCC's accessibility plan, the department remained focused on the goal to address built environment barriers for both our clients and our employees.

### Progress

#### Commitment: Proactive Built Environment Feedback

To better understand the perspectives of persons with disabilities and improve IRCC's practices, the teams responsible for built environment:

- Hold quarterly "Inclusive Workplace Design" meetings, to which Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN) members are invited. Information and updates are provided on current projects and planned initiatives, and the floor is opened to questions and comments.
- Established ongoing working relationships with internal partners such as the Employee Support Office (ESO), the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team and the Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACoE). This open line of communication encourages collaborative work and helps to identify needs and develop projects through information received from various sources.

There is also an interest to be better positioned to track and respond to individual accessibility needs of IRCC employees. To achieve this, IRCC:

- Is creating an intake system for requests related to the built environment, including filters to identify accessibility related requests. In addition to improving tracking and resolution time, this will allow staff to easily identify and report on trends and inform project development.
- In 2024, as of the end of September, a total of 10 requests for accommodation in the built environment were received and processed to completion, all seeking to address a sensitivity to light.
  - ▷ This trend was shared with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), for dimmed lighting to be considered as part of the next GC Workplace standard review and update cycle.

#### Commitment: Building Owner – Tenant Discussions

As a tenant in the buildings IRCC occupies, the department collaborates on an ongoing basis with building owners to ensure accessibility needs are met. IRCC continues to:

- Attend regular meetings with property managers and owners to discuss current and planned building enhancement projects, with the support of PSPC.



As a result of ongoing efforts, the department has made significant progress in the last year on initiatives aimed at improving accessibility. The tables below present initiatives across regions with status updates, estimated completion rates in 2024 and completion rates as reported in 2023 for comparison purposes:

**Automatic Door Openers (ADO)**

Region(s)	Completion Rate Reported in 2023	Completion Rate 2024	Status Update
Pacific, Western, Eastern, Ontario, Atlantic	0%	100%	Completed
National Capital Region	65%	100%	Completed

**All-Access Washrooms (AAW)**

Region(s)	Completion Rate Reported in 2023	Completion Rate 2024	Status Update
Pacific, Western, Eastern, Ontario, Atlantic	35%	90%	In progress
National Capital Region	85%	85%	In progress – awaiting funding approval to continue

**Sit-Stand Desks with Monitor Arms**

Region(s)	Completion Rate Reported in 2023	Completion Rate 2024	Status Update
Pacific	Surrey: 40%	Surrey: 100% Vancouver: 40%	Completed In progress
Western	Edmonton: 40%	Edmonton: 100%	Completed
Ontario	Kitchener: 45%	Kitchener: 100% Hamilton: 10%	Completed In progress
Eastern	Montreal: 40%	Montreal: 95%	In progress
Atlantic	Fredericton: 45%	Fredericton: 100% Charlottetown: 10% Sydney: 10%	Completed In progress In progress
National Capital Region	75%	100%	Completed



## Commitment: Detailed Built Environment Assessment

IRCC has more than 40 worksites across Canada. As we aim for consistency across our offices to ensure compliance with the current Government of Canada (GC) standards, which include guidelines for accessibility and inclusivity, we need to continue to review and assess our physical spaces. To further this goal, IRCC has:

- Completed detailed walkthroughs of several office floors in the National Capital Region which are fitted with old building standards, with the assistance of PSPC. This was done to assess needs and determine eligibility for funding for upcoming fit-up projects.

In addition, to promote awareness and facilitate employee use of spaces that adhere to the current GC Workplace standard, IRCC has:

- Developed and published a toolkit for managers to support conversations with employees on the use of office space:
  - ▷ The toolkit aims to assist in adopting a consistent approach across the department with respect to allowing employees flexibility in their work location and in-office days. PSPC has identified this type of flexibility as a requirement for maintaining accessibility and inclusion in the office.
  - ▷ The toolkit is available on IRCC's intranet and was promoted in the fall of 2024 in the department's internal newsletter Today@IRCC.



## Challenges

IRCC faces challenges in delivering on initiatives aimed at improving accessibility in the built environment, due to:

- Its status as a tenant, as all projects are subject to approval by building owners.
- The level of investment that may be required. For example, major work would be needed to install an all-access washroom in IRCC's office in Whitehorse, which compromises the goal to reach 100% completion for this initiative in all regional offices.

Additionally, as a result of the updated directive on the [common hybrid work model](#), requiring public servants to work on-site a minimum of 3 days per week:

- PwD requiring office space accommodations have encountered delays and limited or unavailable options due to the increased demand, the limited space available, and challenges in adapting workspaces.
- Workspace needs have increased across IRCC offices and must be considered in IRCC's strategy to reduce its office spaces, as mandated by PSPC.
- PSPC's Long-Term Accommodation Plan (LTAP) is being updated which means:
  - ▷ Adjustments to IRCC's office space allocation plans are expected.
  - ▷ Further accessibility reviews and assessments of IRCC's physical spaces are being delayed.
  - ▷ The identification of future modernization project locations in IRCC offices is dependent upon PSPC providing a clear LTAP for the department.

## Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

In the second year of IRCC's plan, the department continues to establish an environment where employees and clients with disabilities can fully access ICT resources that match their needs. The department remains focused on ensuring that employees and clients with disabilities can fully access the systems, software, and tools they require.

### Progress

#### Commitment: Improving Access to Current Systems and Software

The User Experience Optimization directorate in the IT Operations branch was established to identify and eliminate technological barriers, creating the conditions at IRCC for employees and clients with disabilities to have enjoyable ICT experiences. To increase access to accessible systems and software, IRCC has:

- Performed a comprehensive review of existing systems and software for accessibility compliance testing, identifying systems requiring updates and improvements.
- Ensured [Web Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#) AA standards have been applied to releases and upgrades of software:
  - ▷ Assessing over 30 client-facing electronic applications and portals including several legacy systems.
  - ▷ Approximately 1653 accessibility defects were raised, of those 1324 were addressed across client-facing applications and portals, classified by severity (Level A, AA, AAA).
  - ▷ Continuous assessments are ongoing to identify additional defects requiring resolution.
- Continued to triage the issues with various web applications including the Global Case Management System (GCMS) tool.
- Performed testing for the upcoming release of an updated version of the feature related to employee's standard settings for their bilingual signature to ensure compatibility with screen readers and other assistive technologies. This work conducted by IT Operations is aimed to be completed by the end of 2024.

## Commitment: Improving Communication About ICT Tools and Supports

To increase awareness of accessible ICT tools and supports, the team responsible for ICT has:

- Developed master lists of adaptive and assistive technologies, accessibility tools and resources that were shared with accessibility partners, such as the Employee Support Office (ESO) and IT Operations. These lists serve as a resource for case managers and technicians who provide support to employees individually. The lists include:
  - ▷ 50 hardware tools
  - ▷ 25 software tools
  - ▷ 168 Microsoft built-in accessibility features
  - ▷ 30 non-built-in or add-on accessibility features
  - ▷ 78 mobile operating system accessibility features
- Explored the process to create a Remedy Service Request platform for hardware requests managed by IT Operations. Also explored ways to improve the existing software Remedy Service Request platform to better identify accessibility related requests.
- Reviewed survey responses from 12 people from pilot trainings conducted at the end of 2023 to evaluate knowledge of Microsoft accessibility features and accessibility in an IT environment pre and post training. The surveys confirmed that there was a significant increase in:
  - ▷ familiarity of accessibility features
  - ▷ awareness of accessibility in ICT
  - ▷ confidence in using accessibility features
- Organized and hosted 6 custom, bilingual accessibility trainings with Microsoft for over 300 IRCC employees during October's Disability Employment Awareness Month, focused on the following topics:
  - ▷ Creating accessible documents using Microsoft Office products such as Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint.
  - ▷ Establishing a digital accessible workplace, leveraging Microsoft's built-in accessibility features that support vision, hearing, mobility, and neurodiversity.
  - ▷ Inclusive Microsoft Teams Meetings, highlighting the best ways to remain inclusive before, during and after a virtual meeting, both as a facilitator and a participant.



- Collaborated with internal partners to draft a communication plan that focuses on stages of communications. This plan will ensure all IRCC employees are aware of ICT accessibility tools, supports, and the outcomes of the ICT initiatives within the accessibility plan. Teams involved in this work include, but are not limited to:
  - ▷ User Experience Optimization (UXO) Directorate in IT Operations Branch
  - ▷ Information Management, Data & Cyber Security Branch
  - ▷ Project Delivery Branch
  - ▷ ESO (Equity Branch), and
  - ▷ Corporate, Marketing, and Digital Communications Branch

Further progress has been made on the following:

- Established the ICT POD governance framework designed to ensure compliance and alignment in completing the ICT planned actions outlined in IRCC’s accessibility plan, advancing ICT compliance efforts. The ICT POD series is chaired by the IT Operations Branch and includes 7 branches across the department that:
  - ▷ Shared information and raised awareness about the [EN 301 549 Standard](#), which outlines accessibility requirements for digital tools and services, and confirmed the commitment of members to this standard with IRCC’s Architecture Review Committee.
  - ▷ Facilitated a virtual reality experience “A Day in the life of a person with disabilities” for over 100 employees, promoting empathy, understanding, and inclusive practices in the workplace, highlighting every day barriers faced by persons with disabilities.
  - ▷ Shared the process on how to request accessible ICT with employees through an intranet page. Over the past year, the IT Support Connexion page averaged 3,445 views per month, showing a growing interest in accessibility resources.

In addition, the Project Delivery Branch collaborated with HR, and Enterprise Change Management to include ICT accessibility resources in products such as:

- The Manager’s Toolkit, which provides access to a host of helpful tools, checklists, and resources to help successfully onboard and integrate new employees
- Employee Handbook, which provides information and resources for new employee onboarding
- Accommodation Management Guidance

## Commitment: Accessible ICT Request Process

To simplify and improve the request process for ICT accessibility supports, IT Operations branch and the ESO responsible for ICT have:

- Initiated work aimed at streamlining the request process for accessible ICT:
  - ▷ Reviewing current workflows between IT Operations and ESO to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
  - ▷ Drafting the current state workflow for accessibility hardware and software requests related to duty to accommodate and ergonomics.
  - ▷ IT Operations and the ESO continue to work closely together to support individual accommodation requests as required.
- Continued to manage adaptive technology licences:
  - ▷ As of September 2024, the ESO holds 130 licences across 7 software programs, 84 of which are deployed. Ongoing discussions to maintain a small hardware inventory to expedite requests and distribution.
  - ▷ Investigating a new process in the Remedy Service Request to enable tracking equipment lent via Shared Services Canada lending library.
- Established an Innovation Lab within IT Operations to focus on advancing ICT accessibility for employees.
- Worked on enhancing the accessibility of over 100 client auto-responses from the IT Service Desk within IT Operations.
- Deployed Microsoft Office 365 to 17,000 IRCC accounts in 2024.
  - ▷ Since the deployment, IT Operations in collaboration with the ESO promoted and trained employees to utilize built-in accessibility features, reducing the need for procuring additional software.
  - ▷ Following Office 365, IT Operations is focused on deploying Microsoft applications department-wide, including several productivity, security, and management tools. Additionally, the Information Management Branch is completing an Accessibility assessment of SharePoint features, including widgets.
- Started working towards replacing all Windows 10 devices with Windows 11, which will enable accessibility features for employees.



## Commitment: Flexible Customization

To allow employees greater flexibility to customize computer settings, without impacting the integrity of IRCC cybersecurity, in 2024 IRCC has:

- Started a review of standards for computer devices to determine what is recommended for accessibility settings.
- Engaged in consultations with the Cyber Security team to review commonly requested modifications and ensure security assessments are done in advance to reduce wait times.

## Challenges

- Ongoing challenge of securing funding for accessibility-related activities, making it difficult to hire necessary staff and scale efforts to meet growing demands. As a result, many activities will need to be risk-managed and deprioritized.
- The return-to-office mandate has placed additional strain on IT Operations Branch and the ESO, limiting availability of resources to manage accessibility initiatives and ICT service improvements effectively.
- When released, the updated WCAG accessibility guidelines provided by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), are expected to create a challenge as there will be a need to re-assess and fix accessibility issues to be compliant with the new guidelines.





## Communications

As Canada's primary contact for foreign nationals and Canadian citizens for immigration, citizenship, and passport services, IRCC must ensure its communication is inclusive and accessible. This means fostering an inclusive mindset, educating employees on accessible communication best practices, and providing timely support to make all communications accessible.

## Progress

### Commitment: Communication Plan

To promote and support accessibility understanding, IRCC must raise awareness and expand employee knowledge about disabilities and barriers.

In 2024, IRCC continued to implement its accessibility communication plan and started working on new initiatives. In collaboration with key partners including the Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN) and the Employee Support Office (ESO), the IRCC internal communications team has done the following:

- Developed a series of videos to be launched at the end of the year, featuring personal stories, and aiming at increasing understanding across the department on topics such as:
  - ▷ Ableism
  - ▷ Medical vs social model of disability
  - ▷ GC Workplace Accessibility Passport
- Re-organized and updated the content of intranet pages dedicated specifically to persons with disabilities (PwD) and to accessibility to make them more current and user-friendly. Those pages are expected to be published at the end of 2024 and they will include:
  - ▷ resources for supporting PwD
  - ▷ educational materials, such as guides on creating accessible communications and documents
  - ▷ web version of IRCC's Accessible Service Delivery Playbook (20 pages of concrete instructions for accessibility)
- Continued the monthly promotion of the Accessibility Avenue series via the department's internal newsletter Today@IRCC, which counted a total of 3297 views. It included:
  - ▷ Promoting the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) course "Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility".
  - ▷ Providing explanations and tools to remove attitudinal or social barriers as well as barriers related to communications.



- Promoted new content to support PwD through Today@IRCC by sharing personal stories of IRCC employees available on our intranet, such as:
  - ▷ “The invisible struggle: a journey to self-discovery”
  - ▷ “Sound of perseverance: The resilience of Irma Hot”
  - ▷ “Pick my autistic brain: Meet Derek Swicheniuk”
- Promoted to IRCC staff the story of Paralympic athlete Maryam, who came to Canada determined to participate in the Paralympics as a Canadian and inspire younger athletes: [#ImmigrationMatters in Vancouver, British Columbia – Inspiring the next generation of athletes – Canada.ca](#).
- Promoted via Today@IRCC and celebrated commemorative and government-wide events, including:
  - ▷ 2024 Neurodiversity Celebration Week from March 18-24
  - ▷ 2024 National Accessibility Awareness Week (NAAW) from May 26-June 1
  - ▷ Disability Pride in July 2024
  - ▷ International Day of Sign Languages on September 23, 2024
  - ▷ Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) in October 2024
  - ▷ International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in December 2024

### Commitment: Regularly Assessing Content

To continue addressing barriers, IRCC continuously reviews its communications to ensure they meet Government of Canada accessibility standards, including being compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. This year, IRCC has:

- Prioritized four key areas for improving web accessibility in 2024:
  - ▷ content review for plain language
  - ▷ search optimization
  - ▷ adherence to accessibility standards
  - ▷ content inventory management
- Ensured all new web content published follows the updated [Canada.ca – Style Guide](#) and is exploring use of artificial intelligence (AI) for readability assessments.
- Improved web search performance by removing duplicates and deprioritizing content results that interfere with top content.



- Started implementing [Canada.ca's](#) new search solution and piloted new search features, making the search experience more user-friendly. Internal search results relevance has improved by 25% with the new solution.
- Continued to publish and update web pages to meet WCAG 2.1 accessibility guidelines and implemented the latest [Canada.ca templates](#).
- Started developing a web content inventory and management process for the department's external website, with target completion date of end of March 2025.
  - ▷ This process will help to identify and remove redundant, outdated, or irrelevant content, which in turn will provide a more relevant, easier to access and better organized web site. IRCC clients and the population in general will find in this change significant benefits for accessibility.
- Enhanced accessibility of social media content, applying various techniques including alt text and image descriptions and leveraging AI tools.
- Completed an accessibility audit review of the document templates provided to IRCC's employee population and bearing the department's visual identity, with a goal to ensure that the documents used by staff are accessible from the start of their development.
  - ▷ Collaborated with the Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACoE) for support and guidance on how to embed accessibility features and tips.
  - ▷ As of October 2024, the team identified and updated:
    - ▶ 18 Microsoft Word templates requiring updates, of which 5 have been updated.
    - ▶ 6 Microsoft PowerPoint templates requiring updates, of which 2 have been updated.
- Analyzed the latest WCAG 2.2 guidelines that were released in October 2023 and concluded no changes to publishing methods were required since IRCC already complied with the new guidelines, or the updates were not applicable to [Canada.ca](#).
- Engaged Shared Services Canada's Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT), Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) and Principal Publisher to keep track of upcoming changes to accessibility guidelines which are expected by 2026.

## Commitment: Accessibility Remediation Resourcing

To support IRCC's goal of enhancing the internal capacity to develop accessible communications products at the onset, the Communications team has initiated the following:

- Creating an accessibility guideline document to provide teams within the Communications sector a reference tool on including accessibility considerations when designing products.
- Preparing to offer training to employees using design software such as InDesign to enable creation of documents that are accessible.
  - ▷ This will allow to reduce reliance on third-party services for accessibility.

## Other Initiatives: Sign Language Interpretation

- This year, IRCC secured a contract to provide sign language interpretation services for public opinion research consultation activities.
  - ▷ The service includes American Sign Language (ASL), Quebec Sign Language (LSQ) and options for Indigenous sign languages.
  - ▷ This is a significant step towards making IRCC's consultation processes more inclusive and accessible to a broader audience.

## Challenges

To deliver on priorities identified for 2024, IRCC researched how to procure a tool to automate content audits and reviews pertaining to key areas of web accessibility for IRCC and consequently improve efficiency of the review process. Due to budget restraints, this purchase has been put on hold. As a result, audits and reviews continue to be performed manually with current resources.

Efforts to build internal expertise in the development of accessible communication products remains a top priority for the coming year in the Communications sector. Strategic planning will allow to address both priorities, expertise development and important workload.

## Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities

Procurement of goods and services is an essential business enabling function at IRCC. In year two of IRCC's accessibility plan the department's goal remains consistent for accessibility to be fully considered in all procurement processes in the department.

### Progress

#### Commitment: Documentation of Accessibility Checks

IRCC continues to work on making accessibility a standard part of the department's purchasing processes. To document this, IRCC has:

- Reviewed procurement guidelines for purchases under \$10,000 to ensure that accessibility is considered, addressed, and documented consistently.
- Continued to maintain accessibility criteria in Statements of Work for requirements on purchases over \$10,000 where applicable. Should there not be accessibility considerations for a given requirement, business owner justification will be included on file.

#### Commitment: Involving Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in the Procurement Process

IRCC committed to establish mechanisms for obtaining feedback and input from PwD to ensure their perspectives are being considered in the department's procurement guidelines. IRCC has:

- Continued to hold ongoing discussions via an internal accessibility working group to better understand the needs of different groups within the PwD community, specific parts of the purchase process, and particular types of products and services. This working group provides the opportunity for procurement staff to gain insight from PwD on challenges they face and considerations to be included in the procurement process.

#### Commitment: Accessible Procurement Training

IRCC is in the process of developing training and updating its resources for its procurement officers related to accessibility in procurement. IRCC has made progress towards this goal by:

- Creating a new training curriculum for procurement officers and business owners that will include an accessibility section. This will not provide direct training on accessibility, but it will provide information on what to consider in terms of accessibility in the procurement process.
- Enhancing awareness and understanding of accessible procurement by developing an inventory of available trainings and resources related to accessible procurement.
  - ▷ As of September 2024, 60% of the procurement operations team comprised of 27 employees attended at least one GC Accessibility Training and Events presentation – “How to consider accessibility in procurement”.



- Reviewing the Procurement and Contracting Services intranet page using a two-phase project:
  - ▷ Phase 1: Focuses on removing outdated and irrelevant information from the site.
  - ▷ Phase 2: Focuses on adding a dedicated “Procurement and Accessibility” section which will provide:
    - ▶ Detailed instructions and guidance on how to best approach accessibility including templates, forms, and guiding questions.
    - ▶ The update aims to make procurement tools and resources more accessible to IRCC partners.
  - ▷ The current target for completion of both phases is between January and March 2025.

### Commitment: Accessible ICT Procurement Plan

To ensure that accessibility is prioritized in the new case management platform, which is part of IRCC’s Digital Platform Modernization Programme, IRCC has:

- Awarded a contract for the new case management platform (CMP) as of September 2024, which includes accessibility requirements [WCAG 2.1](#), [GC Standard on Web Accessibility](#), Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Guidelines on Making IT Usable by All.

### Challenges

- Due to a high employee turnover and realignment of resources to meet strategic departmental goals in 2024-2025, the review of the Procurement and Contracting Services intranet page and the creation of a new training curriculum for procurement officers and business owners is not complete. Despite this, IRCC continues to prioritize accessibility in procurement and contract management.
- While Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Shared Services Canada (SSC) and TBS host events and share useful material, there is not enough functional guidance or formalized training to accompany the material shared.

## Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

In Canada and across the world, IRCC delivers programs and services to clients in areas including immigration, asylum, settlement, citizenship, and passport. Our clients are as diverse as the extensive range of services the department provides, and IRCC recognizes the importance of its role in promoting accessibility and inclusion. In the second year of IRCC’s accessibility plan, the department continued to focus on laying the groundwork to advance its goal to embed accessibility in the design and delivery of programs and services.

## Progress

### Commitment: Training and Development

Training provides both the foundation and motivation for taking a different approach to designing and delivering the department's programs and services with accessibility in mind. To structure and streamline efforts across the department, IRCC:

- Established and launched the department's first Accessibility Learning Working Group, with members representing all the priority areas of the departmental accessibility plan, as well as experts from IRCC's Learning Academy. The working group aims to:
  - ▷ Centralize efforts and find efficiencies related to accessibility learning needs.
  - ▷ Develop an accessibility learning strategy and roadmap for the department that include options for a common core curriculum and tailored pathways to support progress across all priority areas of IRCC's accessibility plan.
- Started the following as part of the Learning Working Group activities. The group:
  - ▷ Compiled a list of existing learning products, resources and tools related to accessibility, including content available at the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) related specifically to disability inclusion and accessibility.
  - ▷ Performed a task analysis to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for various tasks. This will be followed by a gap analysis to compare these requirements with existing learning resources.
  - ▷ Collected data on selected CSPS course attendance for the IRCC employee population to establish a baseline against which progress can be measured. Initial findings include:
    - ▶ Low departmental attendance for CSPS courses related to disability inclusion according to data available. It is important to note that CSPS published many recent videos related to disability inclusion but is not able to provide organization-specific viewership data for those.
    - ▶ For example, the mandatory courses [Moving from Bias to Inclusion \(INC123\)](#) and [Adopting an Inclusion Mindset at Work \(INC122\)](#), which addresses various types of biases including bias towards persons with disabilities (PwD) have the highest attendance.

The table below presents the number of IRCC employees who attended the selected CSPS courses in fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24, as well as the mid-point of the current fiscal year 2024-25 (with data as of September 30, 2024). As a point of comparison, IRCC's active employee population as of the end of September 2024 (which includes employees with indeterminate status and terms of more than 3 months) was of 12,309 employees.





## Number of Departmental Employees Who Participated in CSPS Courses

CSPS Courses	FY 2022-2023	FY 2023-2024	FY 2024-2025 (As of Sept. 30)	Grand Total (from Apr. 1, 2022, to Sept. 30, 2024)
<a href="#">Responding to Unconscious Bias (INC133)</a>	2	39	49	90
<a href="#">Disability Management and Workplace Wellness (INC120)</a>	44	88	84	216
<a href="#">Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility (INC115)</a>	140	256	283	679
<a href="#">Fostering an Inclusive Workplace (INC118)</a>	-	161	549	710
<a href="#">Moving from Bias to Inclusion (INC123)</a>	536	2,269	960	3,765
<a href="#">Adopting an Inclusion Mindset at Work (INC122)</a>	603	2,437	1,509	4,549
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>5,250</b>	<b>3,434</b>	<b>10,009</b>

In addition, to modernize learning management system and create efficient access to a variety of learning resources for employees, in June 2024 IRCC:

- Launched the new IRCC Learning Portal, a fully accessible and innovative learning management system that empowers employees and managers with efficient tools to track and manage learning history. Key features include:
  - ▷ automated data tracking
  - ▷ instant reporting on course completion
  - ▷ simplified training management
  - ▶ The platform not only supports IRCC’s commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, it also enables senior leaders to monitor organizational training progress, which reduces manual processes and enhances oversight of departmental learning goals.

### Commitment: Feedback on Programs and Services

Feedback from clients and employees can provide useful insight to improve the department’s external and internal programs and services. To enhance collection and processing of feedback related to accessibility, this year IRCC started the following:

- Supported internal services by adding a question to the evaluation survey for all courses available to employees through the new IRCC Learning Portal. This question directs learners to provide any comments related to accessibility of learning products through the [accessibility online feedback form](#). Collected information is managed through IRCC’s feedback process, as required by the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*.
- Supported external-facing services by conducting a review of the “[Give us feedback](#)” section of the IRCC online [web form](#), with the aim to improve how submitted information is managed. The department:
  - ▷ Reviewed the tracking system to enhance the process to categorize, sort and track client feedback received through the web form. Weekly and monthly internal reports on feedback received and trends identified are being issued.
  - ▷ Categorized feedback related to accessibility to have it transferred to the Accessibility Centre of Excellence, which leads the collection and feedback processing as directed by the ACA.
  - ▷ Requested an amendment to the automatic reply that is sent to inform users that they can submit feedback about accessibility using the dedicated [accessibility online feedback form](#). The autoreply is expected to be updated in 2025.

### Commitment: Holding Ourselves Accountable

IRCC is committed to ensure accessibility is being considered, assessed, and monitored across the department’s policies and programs. To assist in identifying roles and responsibilities and in supporting short- and medium-term strategic planning for a uniform approach to accessibility, IRCC has:

- Conducted a comprehensive equity scan to gather information on initiatives related to anti-racism, inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility across all sectors within IRCC. The department-wide equity scan has identified:
  - ▷ Several broad gaps that affect accessibility, such as:
    - ▶ Not enough data collection that can be broken down by sub-categories and used to provide better quality intersectional analysis.
    - ▶ Lack of awareness on the individual and collective level of equity work and Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus).
    - ▶ Lack of awareness of the intersectionality of accessibility with other factors such as race, sex, religion, etc.
    - ▶ Limited resources for Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ARDEI) training, tools, subject matter experts (SME)/personnel.

- ▷ Several recommendations, such as:
  - ▶ Enhanced governance, clarity of roles and accountability structures including establishing systems and processes to ensure ARDEI initiatives, including accessibility, are established in the department.
  - ▶ Knowledge sharing support on departmental initiatives and GBA Plus to raise awareness around accessibility needs and issues.
  - ▶ Enhanced accessibility support processes and procedures for employees with disabilities, including forms and financial services.
  - ▶ Establishment of an Ombuds Office to provide an independent, confidential, and impartial channel for employees to address unresolved complaints and report discrimination.
  - ▶ Better support for mental health, as accommodation can be more nuanced and complex.
- Developed IRCC's Equity Strategy (2025–2028), which will be released in summer 2025 as part of a stronger rights-based and intersectional approach to discrimination (including ableism, sexism and racism). The strategy will outline sector commitments, key priorities, and key performance indicators.
- Made progress with its Gender Based Analysis Plus Policy Review, which is set to be completed by summer 2025 and aims to:
  - ▷ Provide guidance to IRCC staff on how to effectively conduct accessibility assessments as part of policy and program design, service delivery, and people management practices.
  - ▷ Instill individual and collective accountability to GBA Plus implementation, through an intersectional approach that includes an accessibility lens.
  - ▷ Integrate with a broad Equity Strategy that will outline the framework for sector engagement and accountability.
  - ▷ Renew IRCC's commitment to public servants with accessibility needs and ensure alignment with equity, inclusion, and fairness.

## Other Initiatives

### Designing and Implementing the Digital Platform Modernization (DPM) Programme

IRCC has made great strides in 2024 in implementing the first of a series of projects to improve clients' online experience as part of the department's Digital Platform Modernization (DPM) programme.

- A new online account for clients was launched in June 2024, allowing a limited number of clients to create a profile and apply for a visitor visa using the new platform.
  - ▷ Before this first release, accessibility audits were conducted on the platform and issues fixed to ensure compliance with [WCAG 2.1](#), GC Standard on Web Accessibility, Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Guideline on Making IT Usable by All.
- As the first release is being expanded and further releases are being developed, including to open the new online account to applicants for the passport simplified renewal process, IRCC continues to:
  - ▷ Ensure accessibility and GBA Plus are considered and monitored in all phases of development from design to delivery, including building and testing phases. The Quality by Design team developed implementation worksheets for all quality dimensions including accessibility and GBA Plus to ensure alignment with Treasury Board Secretariat's [Standard on Web Accessibility](#) and IRCC's policy on gender-based analysis.
  - ▷ Conduct thorough accessibility testing. Any issues detected are fixed and products re-tested to ensure accessibility requirements are met.
  - ▷ Use readiness assessments which include accessibility components, to support decisions related to products moving to next stages of production.
  - ▷ Aim to ensure IRCC's DPM3 services are delivered with the highest level of accessibility for an optimal client experience.

### Policy and Program Delivery Across Business Lines

IRCC developed initiatives to improve access to services for clients with disabilities, including:

- Centralizing the intake of client requests for alternate formats of application forms and packages needed to complete the application process in immigration and citizenship lines of business.
  - ▷ Currently, clients seeking alternate formats (such as paper, large print, or Braille) of forms and instructions must contact IRCC through various channels, depending on the specific immigration or citizenship service line.
  - ▷ The new process aimed to start in 2025, will centralize the intake of all requests for alternate formats through a single channel, via the internet [IRCC Webform](#) page. This change aims to simplify the process for clients, facilitate better triage of requests, and improve the overall efficiency of handling different format needs.



- ▷ This centralized approach will allow for better data collection and reporting, enabling IRCC to monitor trends, assess client needs, and support continuous improvements in service delivery and accessibility.
- Developing an accommodation process for refugee claimants unable to submit a request to renew their refugee protection claimant document (RPCD) via the online process.
  - ▷ An alternate application form has been developed.
  - ▷ Instructions available on the IRCC web site are expected to be updated by the end of 2024.
- Launching the 2024 Call for Proposals (CFP) for the Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs to be delivered starting April 1, 2025:
  - ▷ Funding for Service Provider Organizations to loan digital devices and to provide digital skills supports to clients of IRCC-funded settlement services. This new digital support service is expected to benefit newcomers who face barriers to accessing settlement services online or remotely.
  - ▷ Funding targeted programming to address the needs of specific newcomer populations who may face unique barriers to settlement and integration.
- Improving the citizenship knowledge test to enhance accessibility for all clients, including those requiring accommodations to address various challenges, with the aim to reduce barriers to citizenship. These new measures include:
  - ▷ extending the duration of the test from 30 to 45 minutes
  - ▷ allowing three attempts to pass it (up from two)
  - ▷ providing a 30-day window in which to complete the test



## Challenges

Ensuring that accessibility is embedded in IRCC's programs and services by design is a major task. To reach this goal, IRCC needs to:

- Develop an accessibility framework that will:
  - ▷ Establish accountability and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities within the department for acting on removing barriers to accessibility.
  - ▷ Include guidance on conducting accessibility reviews of policies, programs, and services to identify and address barriers.
  - ▷ Ensure oversight of actions taken by program and service owners to include accessibility considerations upfront.
  - ▷ Establish a systematic approach to accessibility testing for new products and services.
- Regularly consult with clients with lived experiences of disability.
- Put in place systematic data collection and analysis to continuously monitor and remove barriers and define performance indicators to measure progress.

This work requires dedicated resources and funding to lead to desired outcomes. In the current context of fiscal restraint, IRCC has elected to advance other departmental priorities, and thus this work is being delayed.

While IRCC can attempt to leverage existing data, tools, and feedback mechanisms as well as existing client engagement approaches, the following results can be expected:

- Limited identification of barriers, their impacts on clients and solutions, through consultations and systematic data collection.
- Limited ability and capacity to appropriately measure and track progress in delivering accessible programs and services.

While the small team dedicated to accessibility of client services can provide some guidance to program and service owners and leverage Quality by Design functions applied in the DPM programme, it will remain challenging to ensure it is applied consistently across channels, programs, and services.

Without additional dedicated resources, progress is expected to remain slow in furthering commitments under the programs and services priority area. In addition to inefficiencies and delays, IRCC may be considered as not being ambitious on designing and delivering accessible services for its clients.

In addition, as learning is deemed critical to make progress toward accessibility and disability inclusion, IRCC needs to address challenges and find ways to:

- Promote existing learning products including CSPS courses to ensure completion rates are significantly increased for both employees and management.
- Get data specific to IRCC for other CSPS products and resources addressing disability inclusion, to appropriately measure viewing rates and identify how to generate interest.

## Transportation

In IRCC's first accessibility plan, no barriers were identified in the area of transportation following the review of the department's policies, practices, programs, and services.

In 2024, IRCC began to make connections to this priority area, through feedback received in relation to the updated directive on the [common hybrid work model](#), requiring public servants to work on-site a minimum of 3 days per week as of September. This, as well as new guidance available on transportation, will inform IRCC's approach for this priority area in the second iteration of our accessibility plan in 2025.

## Accommodation

In year two of implementation of its accessibility plan, IRCC remained focused on its goal to offer timely and appropriate accommodation solutions to persons with disabilities, to enable their full and equitable participation in the workplace.

## Progress

### Commitments: Additional Support & Cross-Departmental Collaboration on Accommodation

The Employee Support Office (ESO) is the team within IRCC responsible for assisting employees and managers in obtaining the tools, supports and measures needed to remove barriers in the workplace and to ensure the sound application of the Duty to Accommodate (DTA) policy. The ESO is well established and collaborates continuously with various partners to coordinate accommodation support. In 2024, the ESO has:

- Supported employees on workplace issues related to accommodations:
  - ▷ From January to September 2024, the ESO received a total of 275 requests related to disability.
    - ▶ 138 were successfully resolved and accommodations provided.
    - ▶ 137 are still in progress.





- ▶ Support was provided to 59 employees in completing the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport and in discussing with their manager.
- ▶ More than 42% of requests received were related to the updated return to office mandate requiring employees to work on site 3 days a week.
- Ensured that ESO case managers are equipped to provide effective support to employees by offering them:
  - ▷ Weekly coaching sessions with the team's senior advisor covering topics, including the social model of disabilities, barriers related to the disability ground for discrimination as per the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and solutions to remove those barriers.
  - ▷ Relevant training to stay up to date on various themes including workplace accommodations, assistive tools, the use of the GC Passport and how to assist in a mental health crisis.
- Continued to work collaboratively with internal partners, including:
  - ▷ IRCC's Labour Relations (LR) team, to review the process to support employees and managers on accommodations in the context of the return to office mandate.
    - ▶ Guidance was reviewed and issued to initiate progress toward adopting a social approach to disabilities in alignment with the government's direction in that regard.
    - ▶ This includes shifting from the default requirement for medical proof to be provided in DTA requests to ensuring that managers have sufficient documentation clearly identifying the barriers faced by the employee to support their request rather than their medical condition.
  - ▷ IRCC's teams in charge of our facilities and buildings, to improve the accommodation process and ensure proactive actions are taken to remove barriers for employees in the workplace.
  - ▷ The Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACoE), to share information on systemic barriers noted while processing similar case-specific requests and to discuss possible solutions to address those barriers at the departmental level.
- Continued collaborating with the User Experience Optimization Team (UXO) and the IT Accessibility and Inclusion Team located in IRCC's IT Operations branch to:
  - ▷ Build a list of adaptive hardware that are pre-approved for use in the department, to offer a streamlined approach and reduce delays.

- ▷ Promote use of accessibility features built into Microsoft Office 365, potentially reducing the need for additional software.
  - ▶ The ESO case managers' expertise on Microsoft Office 365 features was developed, allowing to enhance the sharing of knowledge and support to employees and managers.
- Maintained ongoing relationships with external partners to remain current with best practices in the field. These partners include:
  - ▷ the Disability Management and GC Workplace Passport Adopters Communities of Practice
  - ▷ the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) team at Shared Services Canada
  - ▷ the Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA) in the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS)
  - ▷ healthcare professionals

### Commitment: Understanding the Needs of New Hires

IRCC believes in the importance of understanding the needs of new hires to ensure that proper accommodations can be provided in a timely manner. To assist with this, the ESO supported the team responsible for onboarding to:

- Develop a guide designed to provide managers with tools to onboard persons with disabilities, featuring information on best practices, disabilities, and barriers, as well as how to identify and support accommodation needs.

### Commitment: Knowledge Development and Sharing

Through the ESO, the department continues to develop and share its knowledge base, practices and tools related to workplace accommodation. In 2024, the ESO:

- Continued to promote the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport with clients on an ongoing basis while supporting both employees and managers in understanding how to effectively use the passport.
- Continued to take part in initiatives to raise awareness on accessibility and disabilities, as well as the benefits of requesting accommodation and services offered by the ESO, including:
  - ▷ 7 presentations to management teams to promote ESO services.
  - ▷ 3 presentations to teams on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport.
  - ▷ 1 presentation to staff and management teams on neurodiversity.
  - ▷ Attending the Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN) monthly Coffee Chats and sharing information on the accommodation process in general and the context of the return to office mandate.



- ▷ Delivering an all-staff presentation on holding accessible meetings during National AccessAbility Week (NAAW).
- ▷ Participating in a panel discussion during an onboarding event for students.
- Helped management and LR teams in supporting employees facing barriers, in the context of the updated prescribed presence in the office, as they:
  - ▷ Revised information related to DTA in existing LR training.
  - ▷ Initiated the development of a stand-alone training on DTA.
  - ▷ Co-developed, in collaboration with LR, a template letter for medical professionals when seeking clarification on barriers.
  - ▷ Provided input to update the DTA guide for managers for return to office.

### Commitment: Regularly Consulting About Accommodations

IRCC seeks to continuously improve its practices through the collection of feedback about workplace accommodation service delivery. To achieve this, the ESO has:

- Developed and launched a Client Satisfaction Survey aimed at evaluating the quality, effectiveness, and impact of the services provided to employees and managers by the team:
  - ▷ 77 people completed the survey between February and September 2024.
  - ▷ Results indicate high client satisfaction with ESO services and confirm the team provides a trusted service that is vital to workplace inclusivity and efficiency:
    - ▶ 97% of respondents expressed overall satisfaction.
    - ▶ 95% of respondents indicated workplace barriers were well identified, and solutions addressed those barriers.
    - ▶ 96% of respondents believe services rendered improved their efficiency in delivering on expected performance for their job.
  - ▷ Survey results also indicate that in 80% of service requests an initial contact was made within the 5-day service standard.
    - ▶ This data may not accurately reflect the team's adherence to service standards over the fall of 2024. Due to increased demand following announcements on the updated return to office mandate, a backlog of cases developed during the summer. Additional data covering the months of October to December would be required to make a fair assessment.



- ▷ The survey also helped to identify areas for improvement, including:
  - ▶ Further developing ESO's expertise on accommodation solutions in support of cognitive disabilities.
  - ▶ Continuing to streamline processes and develop informal tools to help clients with accommodation requests that have been delayed due to complexity or structural barriers (procurement processes, number of partnerships to be created, etc.).

## Challenges

The updated directive on the common hybrid workplace model, increasing the required on-site presence of employees to a minimum of 3 days per week, had a significant impact on the population of employees with disabilities requiring accommodations. As a result:

- The ESO saw a significant increase in the number of requests received for support, up more than 60% from the same period in 2023.
- Given the current financial restraints in the department, the ESO has not been able to increase human resources to meet the growing demand.
- This has hindered the team's capacity to provide timely services to employees and managers given the number of employees working in the ESO. Prior to the updated directive on the common hybrid workplace model, clients could generally expect to receive ESO services within a week or two. Since the summer of 2024, this changed to taking up to 6 weeks to receive services.

The current level of resources to support employees and managers in removing barriers will continue to impact the timeliness and effectiveness of accommodations. In turn, this may:

- Prevent talented individuals from contributing fully to the workplace, thereby limiting the department's ability to recruit and retain diverse talent.
- Lead to increased stress and health issues among employees, resulting in a less healthy and engaged workforce.
- Create challenges for managers and teams in terms of time and workload management, and hinder team dynamics.
- Contribute to lower employee morale and increase turnover.

Over the past 2 years, the ESO, in collaboration with IT, have been working on implementing a Case Management System (CMS) to ensure reliable case management tracking. The process has been time consuming, costly, and complex. Pending approval and subject to availability of funds and IT capacity, the ESO aims to test a new system by July 2025. The new system will help alleviate the ESO's workload pressures and will streamline tracking and data compilation, enabling more efficient and effective reporting and analysis of barriers and solutions.

In addition, there has been delays in the release by TBS of the digital version of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport. IRCC expects the digital tool to facilitate user experience and streamline the accommodation process for employees and managers. This may also reduce client requests for ESO's support in creating Accessibility passports because it will be more user-friendly.

## Culture

In 2024, IRCC's Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN) is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is an important milestone as this year the Network is marking a decade of efforts for inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwD) and accessibility within the department. The changes required to mindsets and behaviors toward persons with disabilities remain important and complex. IRCC is committed to making gradual and sustained progress over the coming years.

## Progress

### Commitment: Centralized Approach to Supporting Accessibility

IRCC developed a centralized approach to support accessibility efforts shortly after the first accessibility plan was published in 2022 and since then has been determined to improve the efficiency of its practices. The Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACoE) is the centralized team in IRCC responsible to ensure the department's compliance with the ACA and to coordinate the efforts to implement IRCC's accessibility plan. In 2024, the team focused on:

- Stabilizing its operations, including development of tools and processes to enhance monitoring of planned activities to remove barriers across the department.
- Implementing the accessibility governance structure, which provides clarity on roles and responsibilities for all partners involved in IRCC's accessibility ecosystem.
- Strengthening relationships with partners through regular engagement and various initiatives. This included collaboration with:
  - ▷ The Corporate Change Management team to hold focus groups with PwD and middle managers and collect qualitative data on PwD inclusion.
  - ▷ The Office of Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention to interpret available survey results as they relate to PwD and issues they experience in the workplace.
  - ▷ Experts in data analytics within the Enterprise Change and Learning Academy to support the development of an internal dashboard to report on accessibility efforts.
  - ▷ The Learning Academy to co-lead a Learning working group recently established to streamline the horizontal learning needs across all priority areas to avoid duplication of efforts and support the development of knowledge.



- Promoting the feedback process to maximize collection of information allowing IRCC to identify and remove barriers. This included socializing IRCC’s anonymous online feedback form at every opportunity such as:
  - ▷ In various meetings with partners or employees and management teams, whenever relevant.
  - ▷ At the IRCC Innovation Fair held in June 2024, where the ACoE:
    - ▶ Educated employees who visited their kiosk about the ACA and the objective to identify, remove and prevent barriers for PwD.
    - ▶ Distributed an ACoE business card featuring a QR code leading to the IRCC online feedback form.
- Ensuring relevant information about accessibility is centralized and easily available when needed. In 2024, the department’s internal Communications team:
  - ▷ Reviewed and updated the ACoE’s intranet page.
  - ▷ Reviewed all content related to accessibility located on the intranet, made relevant updates, removed outdated content, and centralized the information in one easy to locate page.

## Other Initiatives

### **IRCC Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN) – Leaders in Awareness & Education**

With over 165 members in 2024, the Network is pro-actively involved in the efforts to raise awareness and promote a culture of inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwD) within IRCC.

Here is an overview of some of the PwDN accomplishments in 2024:

- Led regular engagement meetings with its members over the year, for a total of 17 different meetings, including monthly member coffee chats which provide a safe space for members to discuss any issues they face.
- Planned and delivered presentations to IRCC employees and management teams with the collaboration of the ACoE and the Employee Support Office (ESO), to increase knowledge of IRCC’s Accessibility Ecosystem (3 sessions delivered for a total of over 100 participants).
- Planned and coordinated departmental events related to PwD\*:
  - ▷ National AccessAbility Week event, in May 2024 (total of 268 participants)
  - ▷ Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) in October 2024 (total of approximately 330 participants)
  - ▷ International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

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\* It was noted that during the events; approximately 10% of participants used accessible features available such as CART, Sign Language, and simultaneous translation.



- Developed IRCC’s very first Mentorship program specific to PwD who are seeking safe support and guidance to navigate barriers in the workplace, to be launched early in 2025.
  - ▷ The purpose of the program is three-fold and is expected to:
    - ▶ Foster new professional relationships amongst PwD.
    - ▶ Offer a safer space for workplace matters unique to PwD.
    - ▶ Unlock employee potential by providing support to address challenges that hinder full participation in the workplace such as with integrating into the workplace, establishing a career path, and developing professional skills.

In addition, the PwDN is involved in the following collaborative initiatives aimed at raising awareness and educating on accessibility and disability inclusion:

- “Diverse Journeys” awareness videos
  - ▷ PwDN members won the 2024 edition of IRCC’s Employee Idea Fund, an innovation competition to support employee-led ideas through funding, guidance, and resources.
  - ▷ In collaboration with the internal Communications team and the ESO, Network members developed videos with the goal to educate employees on accessibility and disability and help in removing attitudinal barriers against PwD.
    - ▶ The videos address the topics of ableism, medical vs social model of disability, GC Workplace Accessibility Passport, and a day in the life with and without accommodations.
- “Accessibility Avenue” awareness campaign
  - ▷ Launched at the end of 2023, the “Accessibility Avenue” campaign continued to be promoted in 2024 with monthly publications on topics related to barriers and disability.
  - ▷ New content and a schedule for publications in 2025 have been developed. The series will feature a story linked to each of the priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

## Culture Change Strategy and Action Plan

IRCC committed to develop a strategy and action plan to support the inclusion of PwD and accessibility in the department. This will be essential to initiate a mindset change across IRCC and establish safe services and workplace environment for PwD. To further this complex commitment with an efficient and sustainable approach, our efforts in 2024 focused on the following:

- Collect qualitative data from communities within IRCC.
- Engage with key internal partners working on related mandates.



## Qualitative Data Collection

In February and May 2024, multiple focus groups sessions were held with PwD and middle managers to engage the community on the current state of disability inclusion and accessibility culture in IRCC and to collect qualitative data. The objective was to identify both the positive elements as well the challenges and to establish a baseline to inform future action planning.

### Participants

There was a total of 48 participants from both communities:

- 18 PwD, separated in 2 groups
- 30 middle managers, separated in 3 groups; 1 out of 3 managers identified as a PwD

### Methodology

- Each group was asked a series of questions to gather input, including on “what is working well” within IRCC and “what requires improvement”.
- Elements related to “what is working well” were collected using a brainstorm approach where participants were invited to provide as many answers as they could.
- Elements related to “what requires improvement” were gathered using a two-phase approach:
  - ▷ Phase 1: brainstorm approach
  - ▷ Phase 2: prioritization of answers gathered, where each participant was required to vote for 3 answers

### Questions and Key Findings – PwD

The table below presents the top 5 answers provided by PwD to the question: What currently works in IRCC?

Top 5 Positive Factors for PwD	Mentions
Growing momentum for accessibility among employees and managers	24
Increased number of PwD related tools, events, and resources available (IT and non-IT)	14
Access to and impact of accommodations such as DTA, ESO, and GCPassport	10
Presence and impact of the Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN)	7
Implementation of the <i>Accessible Canada Act</i> and related obligations and entities	6



The table below presents the top 5 challenges identified by PwD through voting on the most important answers provided to the question: What is holding us back?

<b>Top 5 Challenges for PwD</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Use of the medical model rather than the social model for disability	13
Lack of accountability for non-accessible behaviors (e.g., selection processes, documents, events, attitudes)	9
Ableism (discriminatory behaviors or attitudes)	7
Lack of psychological safety (micro-aggressions, fear of reprisal)	7
Challenging accommodation processes (delays and complexity)	3

### Questions and Key Findings – Middle Managers

The table below presents the top 5 answers provided by middle managers to the question: What works in general regarding accessibility and inclusion at IRCC, related to our culture?

<b>Top 5 Positive Factors for Managers</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
Accommodation Team/Process and Support	18
Increased awareness	12
Increased availability of tools, events, and resources	7
Support from Senior Management	6
More transparency, open discussions and less bias	4

The table below presents the top 5 challenges identified by middle managers through voting on the most important answers provided to the question: What doesn't work in general regarding accessibility and inclusion at IRCC, related to our culture?

<b>Top 5 Challenges for Managers</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Lack of clear, equitable and flexible guidelines and policies	19
Lack of support/buy-in from Senior Management	7
Training availability and time constraints	5
Managing time and priorities	4
Delay between accommodation request and resolution	3

## Summary of Observations and Findings

Both PwDs and Middle Managers were aligned on the top three positive factors they identified, although in a slightly different order:

- Growing momentum/awareness of accessibility within the organization
- Increased availability of tools, events, and resources for PwDs and managers
- Impact of access to accommodations through tools like DTA, ESO, and GC Workplace Accessibility Passport

The challenges identified by the two groups differ significantly:

- PwDs top 3 challenges focus on systemic issues such as the use of the medical model, lack of accountability for non-accessible behaviors, and ableism.
- Middle Managers' top 3 challenges are more operational, centering on lack of clear guidelines, lack of senior management support, and time/training constraints.

It is interesting to note in the tables presented above, that the middle managers' experiences in relations with "support from senior management", appears in both the positive table and the challenges table. Middle managers seem to have different lived experience in the field with senior management's support and buy-in when time comes to support accessibility and disability inclusion.

While the growing momentum around accessibility is being acknowledged by both groups, findings show there is a definite need to address systemic and operational issues to create a more inclusive and accessible workplace environment in the department.

Further analysis of all the data collected during the focus groups sessions will be conducted. This will assist in identifying concrete actions that can be taken and in shaping IRCC's culture change strategy.

## Engagement with Key Collaborators

The [2022 Public Service Employee Survey](#) results for IRCC's population show:

- Respondents who identified as PwD declared they are experiencing harassment and discrimination in a greater proportion than other IRCC employees.
  - ▷ PwD: 18% experienced harassment and 16% discrimination
  - ▷ General employee population: 8% experienced harassment and 7% discrimination
- 46% of respondents who identified as PwD indicated that their disability was related to mental health issues.
- 58% of PwD respondents who declared experiencing harassment in the workplace also declared experiencing mental health issues.

This data shows a possible interrelation between disability and mental health. Whether mental health is identified as the disability or is experienced as a result of or together with the disability, it is worth exploring what the relationship is and how it could impact IRCC's approach to the PwD community.

In addition, in 2024 IRCC conducted its first internal Employee Pulse Survey that covered topics including impacts of the fall 2023 departmental realignment as well as mental health and wellness. Results are aligned with the PSES in showing that disability and mental health are possibly related:

- Respondents identifying as PwD stated a higher work-related stress level than the general employee population: 42% of them said high (22%) or very high (20%) versus 29% of the general employee population who said high (19%) or very high (10%).

Given the above results, it was deemed critical to engage with internal partners who are experts in the area of mental health and harassment prevention. The ACoE initiated discussions with:

- The **Mental Health and Wellness** team to examine data related to PwD and seek collaboration. The team is currently developing IRCC's Psychological Health and Safety Strategy 2025–2028. There is an opportunity to align commitments and actions to support PwD in both their strategy and the next IRCC accessibility plan.
- The **Office of Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention (OWHVP)** to develop action items dedicated to preventing harassment and violence towards PwD. The OWHVP reviewed available survey results to identify relevant trends and contributing factors for the ACoE to consider further. Collaboration will continue to identify meaningful actions to be included in IRCC's accessibility plan 2025–2028.

## Challenges

On September 26, 2024, the Federal Chief Accessibility Officer was invited to address the IRCC Accessibility Steering Committee. The following question was asked to her: "What is the top priority the government should be focusing on to have the most impact?" She emphasized that training is the most important, to support a shift in culture.

The response aligns with one of the general challenges observed across the department which is the lack of knowledge or interest about accessibility, whether it is about ensuring documents are accessible, using inclusive terminology or even basic awareness of disabilities and the need for accessibility. A concrete and recent example of this relates to the DEAM departmental event that was held on October 10, 2024, with a hybrid approach.

This year's event showed a 74% decrease in participation compared to last year's event in 2023:

- DEAM 2023: 1228 participants
- DEAM 2024: 30 in person and 300 virtual, for a grand total of about 330 participants



It's essential to evaluate the situation, identify possible reasons for the decline in attendance, and quickly make necessary adjustments to maximize our efforts toward disability inclusion and accessibility at IRCC.

Raising awareness and building knowledge remains the top challenge and priority for driving a real shift in mindsets across the department. If people don't feel connected to the issue, they're less likely to engage and take those small but impactful steps toward progress. Also, dismantling misconceptions and stereotypes about disabilities is the first step to a shift toward positive attitudes and behaviors.

Another critical challenge that cannot be ignored is confirmed through survey results that show there is a greater prevalence of mental health issues and harassment experienced by PwD than the general employee population in the department. It seems the PwD community is facing added struggles and barriers because of the workplace culture currently in place.

To address these challenges, IRCC is planning to develop a Culture Change Strategy and Action Plan to be implemented over 2025–2028. In the interim, we will expand collaboration with internal partners to identify actions and solutions for short term impact. This approach will help address urgent needs and support the PwD community while ensuring alignment with longer-term strategic objectives in IRCC's second accessibility plan in 2025.

## Consultations

IRCC believes that consulting and engaging with partners, clients, and employees, especially persons with disabilities, is crucial in advancing its commitments toward accessibility. The principle of “Nothing Without Us” has been embedded into IRCC’s practices primarily through the department’s Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN). The Network, now with 165 active members, is well established in IRCC. The PwDN collaborates on an ongoing basis with various internal partners to raise awareness of the challenges faced by employees with disabilities and advocate for their successful integration in the workplace.

IRCC recognizes that not all employees with disabilities are comfortable self-identifying or are involved in the Network. For this second progress report, IRCC aimed to broaden its outreach and expand the consultation process beyond the PwDN.

### Call Outs for Volunteers

Call outs for volunteers interested in contributing to the 2024 progress report were sent in August and September 2024 via different mediums: messages in IRCC’s internal newsletter “Today@IRCC”, emails to the PwDN and announcements at Network meetings. The call outs emphasized that the consultation would be conducted confidentially, and that volunteers’ privacy would be respected throughout the process.

This year, IRCC had 36 employees with disabilities volunteer compared to only 7 last year, marking a 500% increase.



## Consultation Process

The consultation process for the 2024 progress report was established as follows:

- This year, 5 priority area sections were identified for consultation: employment, built environment, communications, accommodation, and culture (compared to 3 sections reviewed in 2023).
- Each volunteer was assigned 2 of the 5 sections for review, based on their preferences gathered through a survey, ensuring they received at least one of their choices. 31 out of 36 volunteers responded to the survey.
- In early October, the 31 volunteers received their assigned sections by email, with instructions to:
  - ▷ Review their assigned sections.
  - ▷ Provide comments, feedback, or suggested edits.
  - ▷ Validate if the content is meaningful.
  - ▷ Validate if the content is easy to follow and to understand.

## Results and Comments Received

19 volunteers returned their sections with comments and valuable insights, and the report was updated where appropriate. Comments received included:

- Suggestions for plain language edits.
- Suggestion to write names in full with acronyms in each section, rather than only once at the first instance in the report, for ease of reading.
- In the culture priority area, volunteers:
  - ▷ Validated the challenges and barriers outlined.
  - ▷ Confirmed that barriers outlined applied to both employees and clients.
  - ▷ Confirmed that support from senior management is essential to operate a lasting culture change in the department.
- In the employment and accommodation priority areas, volunteers:
  - ▷ Highlighted the need for learning resources and support for managers on the accommodation process.
  - ▷ Confirmed that the return to office mandate had a major impact on stress levels for PwD.

Moving forward, IRCC plans to continue expanding and improving its consultation practices.



## Feedback

As required by the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*, IRCC implemented an online accessibility feedback process that allows anyone to submit feedback on IRCC's accessibility plan, barriers encountered, or any matter related to accessibility in the department. This year, IRCC continued its efforts to collect feedback through the required feedback channels: the online form, email, phone, and mail. In an effort to expand the identification of barriers, feedback was also collected through other means, including during meetings with internal partners, events and the IRCC web form, which is already collecting feedback on IRCC's services. This allowed IRCC to identify more barriers than the previous year. Exchanging directly with people offered an opportunity to raise awareness on accessibility and helped us better understand existing challenges and new barriers that are emerging.

The Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACoE) continues to ensure all feedback received is processed according to the Accessible Canada Regulations (ACR) and taken into consideration by the department. The ACoE continues to engage with relevant partners to discuss potential solutions and challenges in addressing and removing barriers. Progress is tracked to ensure timely action.

### Feedback Received

In the past 12 months, the ACoE received a total of 212 feedback submissions, with 57 (27%) specifically related to accessibility. The other 155 submissions were not related to accessibility and were considered out of scope.

Out of the 57 accessibility related feedback submissions:

- 51 were internal to IRCC, among which 20 were anonymous
- 6 were external to IRCC, and all identified themselves

The feedback received was categorized into the following types of barriers:

Barrier Type	Number of Submissions
Physical Barriers	18
Technological Barriers	13
Information/Communication Barriers	11
Policy/Practice Barriers	10
Architectural Barriers	3
Attitudinal Barriers	2

The breakdown indicates that physical barriers were the most frequently reported, followed by technological and information/communication barriers also representing significant areas of concern. Although fewer people reported attitudinal barriers, the department knows that they are present, and that people are likely still hesitant to testify to biases or discrimination they experienced. IRCC recognizes the need to educate our workforce to identify these barriers and to create a safe environment for reporting them through the feedback process. Despite having identified a low number of attitudinal barriers this year, we know that it remains a crucial area of focus.

**Barriers by Priority Area**

Priority Area	Feedback Received
Accommodation	9
Built Environment	11
Communications	7
Culture	1
Employment	8
ICT	6
Programs and Services	7
Transportation	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

**Examples of Feedback and Actions Taken**

- Internal submission received highlighting the use of outdated French terminology for “persons with disabilities” across numerous pages on IRCC’s intranet site:
  - ▷ Engaged with IRCC’s internal communications team to address the barrier reported.
  - ▷ This resulted in 37 pages being updated to incorporate the proper terminology “personnes en situation de handicap” rather than “personnes handicapées”.
- External anonymous submission received from someone with a visual impairment sharing that they have experienced significant challenges in accessing accommodation measures while attending the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program:
  - ▷ Engaged with IRCC’s Settlement Network (SN) team to discuss the barrier and to see what actions can be taken to alleviate the issue.





- ▷ The SN team conducted a review of the program and consulted internally to assess the issue and determine required actions. The team committed to:
  - ▶ Sending reminders to regional IRCC teams and IRCC-funded organizations about:
    - The availability and cost eligibility of support services.
    - The accessibility features available on the Avenue learning management system. Avenue is an IRCC funded tool for managing language training, including the LINC program. Organizations using the tool should ensure instructors and students are aware of the features and how to access them.
  - ▶ Emphasizing the importance of incorporating accessibility considerations in the next review of IRCC-funded language training services, including the LINC program.
- Internal Submission received highlighting that some of IRCC’s learning products were not fully accessible:
  - ▷ Engaged with the Learning team to discuss this feedback. The team:
    - ▶ Now systematically includes closed captioning for all training being delivered through Microsoft Teams.
    - ▶ Is considering adding accessibility reviews to the regular maintenance cycles of their training courses.
    - ▶ Adheres to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, for all their new courses, ensuring a more inclusive environment.

IRCC is determined to continue its efforts to raise awareness on ACA compliance, the feedback process, and the identification and removal of barriers for persons with disabilities. As awareness grows on the importance of disability inclusion and accessibility, the department expects to see an increase in volume of accessibility related feedback. IRCC will keep refining its approach, ensuring that the feedback received not only helps us remove existing barriers but also guides us in shaping future accessibility departmental priorities and actions.

## Planning for 2025

In 2025, IRCC will update its accessibility plan as required under the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*. The following principles will act as a compass as we tackle this work and map out the next 3-year cycle to advance accessibility in the department:

- Actions over aspirations
- Progress over perfection

IRCC will leverage the experience gained over the past two years by examining both the department's successes and challenges in implementing the first accessibility plan. We will commit to put concrete actions in place to remove barriers for persons with disabilities in the department and ensure progress is tracked and measured.

The following items have been identified as priorities for consideration in the next iteration of IRCC's accessibility plan. These will support impactful changes across all priority areas:

- Learning
  - ▷ To develop knowledge, skills and positive attitudes toward disability inclusion and accessibility.
- Culture Change Strategy
  - ▷ To drive a shift in mindsets across IRCC and foster a safe workplace environment for persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility Framework
  - ▷ To support embedding accessibility in the review and development process of both employee and client related policies and programs.

IRCC recognizes that the mandate to limit spending across the federal government will impact the department's capacity to deliver on commitments. This will need to be factored in as the department plans the actions to take in the next 3-year cycle. This also means that now more than ever, we will need to be innovative, collaborative, and determined to move forward and contribute to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

# Annex

## Definitions and Key Terminology

### **Ableism**

Discrimination in favor of able-bodied people, which creates a discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility refers to how services, technology, locations, devices, environments, and products are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities equal opportunities to take part in life activities. The term means that there has been conscious planning, design, and effort to make sure something is barrier-free to persons with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population by making everything more usable and practical for all people.

### **Accommodation**

Accommodation refers to taking steps to remove disadvantages for people that result from barriers.

### **Barrier**

According to the *Accessible Canada Act* (2019):

“Barrier means 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 persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.”

### **Disability**

According to the *Accessible Canada Act* (2019), disability is: “A physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.”

Anyone can identify as a person with a disability (PwD) if they experience one or more of these impairments or functional limitations that, in interaction with a barrier, hinder their full and equal participation in society.