



# Public Health Agency of Canada Accessibility Plan

2022–2025



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada

Canada

To promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health.

—Public Health Agency of Canada

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# Table of Contents

Foreword.....	2
Introduction .....	3
Consultations .....	6
Employment .....	7
The Built Environment.....	8
Information and Communication Technologies.....	9
Communication, other than information and communication technologies.....	10
The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities.....	11
The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services .....	12
Transportation .....	13
Culture .....	14
Persons with Disabilities Network .....	15
Planning and Reporting Framework .....	15
Conclusion .....	16

# Foreword

## Message from the President

I am pleased to present the first Accessibility Plan for the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). This plan fulfills our Agency requirements under the *Accessible Canada Act*, but more than that, it represents our commitment to ensuring that all PHAC policies, programs and services are developed and implemented with a focus on accessibility for Canadians.

Given that one in five adults in Canada is living with a disability, this commitment is integral to our mission to promote and protect the health of all the people in Canada.

The Accessibility Plan outlines PHAC's roadmap over the next three years toward the federal government's goal to be barrier-free by 2040. It outlines the Agency's strategy and commitments in seven areas required under the Act and one additional area – culture. Accessible workplace culture has been identified as an important driver of change including in consultations conducted through PHAC's Persons with Disabilities Employee Network under the principle of "Nothing Without Us".

The PHAC Employee Network plays a key role in helping PHAC innovate and remove barriers for employees as well as raise awareness of challenges and opportunities for creating an inclusive workplace.

While we have started to make progress in removing barriers for persons with disabilities, there is much work ahead. Step one is realizing we all have a role in effecting change and fostering a culture of accessibility and inclusion.

I encourage you to read the accessibility plan to learn more about PHAC's activities and initiatives. We welcome your feedback on this plan and our yearly progress reports as we continue on this journey to a barrier-free Canada.

Thank you,  
Dr. Harpreet Kochhar  
President, Public Health Agency of Canada

# Introduction

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) requires all Government of Canada departments and agencies to publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will remove barriers to make their organizations more accessible by 2040.

An Accessibility Plan must be published every three years. This plan outlines the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC or the Agency) strategy and specific commitments to remove barriers to accessibility in the seven priority areas outlined in the Act. This is PHAC's first Accessibility Plan.

PHAC has chosen to include an eighth priority area, culture, to reflect feedback received during employee consultations, along with federal public service guidance. Together, the actions, commitments and activities in all eight areas of this plan should lead to improvements in accessibility at PHAC by the end of the first three-year cycle. They will also help the Agency stay on track to reach the goal of a barrier free and fully accessible by 2040.

Progress reports must be published each year on the anniversary of the initial plan's publication to provide updates, refine commitments, and include any feedback received by the public.

**A barrier (as defined in the Act) includes 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 an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.**

## About the Public Health Agency of Canada

The [role of PHAC](#) is to:

- Promote health;
- Prevent and control chronic diseases and injuries;
- Prevent and control infectious diseases;
- Prepare for and respond to public health emergencies;
- Serve as a central point for sharing Canada's expertise with the rest of the world;
- Apply international research and development to Canada's public health programs; and
- Strengthen intergovernmental collaboration on public health and facilitate national approaches to public health policy and planning.

PHAC recruits scientists and researchers, epidemiologists, public health experts, doctors and nurses, policy analysts and administrative professionals, and many others. The Agency is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the population of Canada and a workplace that supports all employees. The Agency strives to deliver programs and services that recognize the diverse needs of Canadians, including persons with disabilities.

## General

Under a Shared Services Partnership, the Accessibility Readiness Team at Health Canada, is responsible for the development and coordination of this Accessibility Plan for PHAC, in accordance with regulations under the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and direction provided in the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#). The Team is also responsible for the feedback process and progress reporting on this Plan.

To request a copy of this Accessibility Plan or the feedback process description in an alternate format, or to provide feedback, please contact us in one of the following ways:

**Contact:** Director of the Accessibility Readiness Team

**By Mail:** Public Health Agency of Canada Accessibility Feedback  
70 Columbine Dr; Brooke Claxton building  
Address Locator 0907D  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

**Email:** [art-epa@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:art-epa@hc-sc.gc.ca)

**Toll free Telephone:** 1-833-725-2751

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**Teletypewriter:** 1-800-465-7735 (Service Canada)

**[Accessibility Feedback Form](#)**

## Accessibility Statement

Advancing accessibility has been an important long-term organizational goal for PHAC. The Agency has a strong commitment to employment equity, duty to accommodate, and diversity and inclusion, all of which have been incorporated into a Multi-Year Diversity and Employment Equity Plan.

PHAC has adopted a ‘yes by default’ approach to accommodations, established a single window for employees and managers to access services under the duty to accommodate, and developed the Workplace Accommodations Passport, which is used in many federal departments.

These mark important steps forward in PHAC’s accessibility journey and will continue to expand on these actions through this Accessibility Plan.

PHAC is also committed to ensuring the programs and services delivered to Canadians are accessible and that persons with disabilities communities are consulted as those programs and services are developed.

### Did You Know?

PHAC implemented an Accessibility Passport in 2019 and became early adopters of the [GC Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) in 2020. The Passport, owned by the employee, outlines their accommodation needs, and identifies their work barriers. Employees and managers work with the Health Canada/PHAC Workplace Wellness Service Centre and a case manager, to address their accommodation needs. The Passport follows the employee throughout the duration of their public service career.

# Consultations

Engagement with employees with disabilities and allies was central to the identification of barriers to accessibility at PHAC, and led to the development of the commitments for this Accessibility Plan. Following the principle of “Nothing Without Us,” we remain committed to continued consultation and collaboration.

PHAC shared surveys and led virtual engagement sessions with employee networks. The objective of these sessions was to raise awareness and identify barriers to accessibility.

Consultation with the PHAC Persons with Disabilities Network took place in the form of virtual presentations and round table discussions on this Accessibility Plan, and the feedback mechanism. Members were given the opportunity to provide input during the consultations, or provide feedback via email anonymously. PHAC is committed to ongoing collaboration with the Network to identify activities and implementation strategies.



# Employment

The goal of the Employment area under the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure access to employment opportunities and accessible workplaces.

Ensuring PHAC is a diverse workplace that includes persons with disabilities, both visible and invisible has been a commitment of the Agency, as reflected in the Multi-Year Diversity and Equity Plan.

## PHAC's Objective

Provide access to PHAC jobs and long-term career prospects for persons with disabilities (PWD), focussing on:

- Recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities; and
- Ensuring an accessible workplace with no barriers to employee accommodations.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Working with the PHAC Persons with Disabilities Network and key disability stakeholders, revise staffing and assessment tools, approaches and resources to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

**Commitment 2:** Support managers in meeting or exceeding PHAC hiring targets using an enhanced recruitment experience.

**Commitment 3:** Enable career success and progression of employees with disabilities through onboarding, training, access to accommodations, talent management and mentorship.

**Did You Know?**

PHAC has identified Branch PWD Ambassadors to serve as the senior point of contact to help promote, educate and identify hiring needs in order to recruit and attract new talent.

# The Built Environment

The goal of the Built Environment area under the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure all people can move freely around federal buildings and public spaces.

PHAC buildings and facilities are a combination of owned and leased spaces, which include laboratory facilities, office accommodations, and special purpose spaces.

In all PHAC buildings and facilities projects, whether in owned or leased spaces, the plans, designs and construction, or fit-ups meet or exceed current accessibility standards. PHAC looks at ways to include features such as adaptable lighting and wayfinding technology, and continues to reinforce scent free work environments to address environmental sensitivities.

## PHAC's Objective

Modernize all PHAC spaces to meet or exceed accessibility standards by 2040 focussing on:

- Instituting an accessibility review for all new designs, builds and refits; and
- Consulting and incorporating feedback of persons with disabilities who access the facilities, at the planning and design stage and throughout any project.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Work with Public Services and Procurement Canada to ensure that all new facility fit-ups/construction are accessible, and implement an assessment process for existing facilities to identify potential accessibility upgrades to be incorporated into planned/future projects.

**Commitment 2:** Continuously engage internal and external stakeholders to identify and remove barriers to the built environment and use innovative or novel technologies to support accessibility.

### Did You Know?

The Persons with Disabilities Network is working to accommodate persons with disabilities beyond their workstations through the Accessible and Inclusive Meeting Spaces (AIMS) initiative. It is developing universally accessible and inclusive meeting spaces that include, among other things, variable height tables and adaptable lighting. The first PHAC accessible and inclusive meeting space was launched in 2020.

# Information and Communication Technologies

The goal of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) area of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure the accessibility of digital content and technologies.

ICT include hardware, software, applications and websites for both external and internal facing systems for clients and employees.

## PHAC's Objective

All PHAC's ICT meet accessibility standards by focussing on:

- New systems and applications are accessible for all employees and external users
- Accessibility of existing information technology (IT) systems is assessed and areas are identified for short and long-term improvement.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Strengthen the current level of accessibility of ICT at PHAC by continuing to ensure new (internal and public facing) systems, including internally developed or procured hardware and software, meet modern accessibility standards.

**Commitment 2:** Improve accessibility support (guidance and advice) to users in the development and procurement and acquisition of new software.

**Commitment 3:** Promote accessibility awareness across the Agency by providing training and raising awareness to foster an accessibility-first mindset for all IT projects.

**Commitment 4:** Strengthen the accessibility governance and process by developing internal policies and procedures for accessible ICT.

### Did You Know?

iSTOP is the Centre for Biosecurity's primary case management system and is used to implement the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act. iSTOP undergoes continuous evaluation and quality control for accessibility to meet or exceed current Canadian and international accessibility standards. This iterative approach ensures that all internal users and Regulated Parties can access iSTOP without barriers.

# Communication, other than information and communication technologies

The goal of the Communications area of *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure barrier-free services and spaces for persons with disabilities.

PHAC has taken steps to ensure barrier-free communications for employees. For example, through the provision of sign language interpretation at town halls and other events, as well as by providing guidance and resources on leading accessible meetings and creating accessible documents. For external communications with the public about policies, programs, services and initiatives, the Agency adheres to Government of Canada accessibility guidelines and policies for advertising, social media, multimedia and web content.

## PHAC's Objective

Both the public and employees of PHAC can readily access and understand all communication materials whether they have a visible or invisible disability.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Ensure PHAC external digital content and new internal digital content are accessible by default.

**Commitment 2:** Provide Agency communications products and events in accessible formats.

### Did You Know?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PHAC ensured that public health updates with media were made accessible using simultaneous translation and sign language interpretation available through the National Press Gallery.

# The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The goal of the Procurement pillar of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure the purchasing of goods, services and facilities is accessible.

PHAC is supported by Health Canada as part of the Shared Services Partnership for Procurement Activities. It procures most of the goods, services and facilities needed for the Agency through a relationship with Shared Services Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

## PHAC's Objective

Implement modern procurement practices so that the goods, services and facilities procured by PHAC are accessible.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Incorporate accessibility into procurement and contracting documents, templates and guidance.

**Commitment 2:** Increase awareness amongst procurement officers and cost center managers to consider accessibility from the start of a procurement process through training, information sessions, or guidance documentation.

### Did You Know?

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) has moved its tendering opportunities to CanadaBuys to ensure the digital platform will align with emerging new standards for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) accessibility. PHAC works with PSPC to use this platform for its procurement processes.

# The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

The goal of the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services area of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure Canadians receive services that are accessible to all.

PHAC manages and offers programs and services that support Canadians in maintaining and improving their health.

The Agency is committed to engaging persons with disabilities in the development of policies, the design and delivery of programs and services; and to ensuring that engagement with Canadians, including at border ports of entry, is accessible.

## PHAC's Objective

PHAC programs and services are designed in consultation with persons with disabilities and are both accessible to and take into account the needs of persons with disabilities.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Build capacity to consult, develop, design, deliver and evaluate accessible and inclusive programs and services

**Commitment 2:** Integrate accessibility features into new and existing programs and services.

## Did You Know?

Progress towards accessible services was evident through PHAC's border operations throughout the pandemic. Designated Officers considered accessibility factors in their decisions making, including following a risk assessment process when evaluating a traveller's quarantine or isolation plan. Further, the Central Notification Service, which provides virtual screening, enables travellers to use the language of their choice through simultaneous translation services for more than 250 languages, and has support for ASL and QSL.

# Transportation

The goal of the Transportation area under the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure a barrier-free federal transportation network.

PHAC has a limited role in this area. PHAC maintains a fleet of vehicles for specific operational purposes, such as inspections, security monitoring, mail services, and mobile labs. The fleet is composed of standard passenger vehicles such as sedans and sport utility vehicles which have no modifications related to accessibility. In cases where an employee requires accessibility features in order to operate a fleet vehicle, an accommodation would have to be made.

At this time, PHAC does not have any fleet vehicles which would meet the technical definition of accessible, namely a motor vehicle designed and manufactured, or converted, for the purpose of transporting persons who use mobility aids.

## PHAC's Objective:

Assess the accessibility requirements for PHAC's fleet by focussing on current and future accessibility standards, and ensuring fleet purchases meet those standards.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Identify any potential accessibility features available that can be included in new PHAC fleet vehicle acquisitions.

**Commitment 2:** Implement any new accessibility standards relating to fleet vehicles as prescribed by Treasury Board Secretariat and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

# Culture

The *Accessible Canada Act* also focusses on building accessibility confidence and creating a culture of accessibility within the federal public service.

At PHAC, through the Persons with Disabilities Network and allies, work has been underway to increase awareness of barriers, to create a ‘yes by default’ and ‘Nothing Without Us’ culture.

PHAC has raised awareness of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, through the engagement with the Network, by proactively responding to feedback from the persons with disabilities community, and through the development of this Accessibility Plan. PHAC has begun to put in place programs and supports to enable full participation of persons with disabilities in the workplace.

More progress is required to ensure a representative workforce and to increase the hiring of persons with disabilities at all levels and in all functions.

Ongoing consultations with stakeholders in the persons with disabilities community will be required to inform research, policy and program development and design.

## PHAC’s Objective

PHAC has an agency culture which supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities and a vision to proactively eliminate and prevent barriers to ensure greater opportunities for persons with disabilities, with emphasis on understanding and implementing a ‘Nothing Without Us’ approach.

## Commitments

**Commitment 1:** Promote an accessibility-informed culture that creates a positive, inclusive workplace.

**Commitment 2:** Ensure all PHAC employees have the knowledge and tools to become accessibility confident through training and engagement.

### Did You Know?

In 2022, PHAC Persons with Disabilities Network co-led two well-received educational series aimed at building an accessibility-confident culture at PHAC. The first was on accessible documents and the second, a duty-to-accommodate 101 for managers.



# Persons with Disabilities Network

PHAC's Persons with Disabilities Network is an active employee network of volunteers whose mandate is to improve the quality of work-life for persons with disabilities and strengthen employment equity at PHAC. The Network consists of both PHAC employees with disabilities, as well as those who wish to contribute to accessibility and inclusiveness in the workplace as an ally. The Network includes a Chair chosen by the membership and a Champion from senior management that is appointed by PHAC's President. Both the chair and champion play a key role in advocacy and raising awareness about accessibility at PHAC.

The Network plays a leadership role as a model of inclusion and accessibility, by advocating for the right to equal employment and full participation in all social and economic aspects of work-life at PHAC. Keeping true to the principle of 'Nothing About Us, Without Us', the Network serves as a voice for persons with disabilities at PHAC, to ensure that nothing about persons with disabilities is done without the participation and input of persons with disabilities.

**Email:** [pwdn-rph@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:pwdn-rph@phac-aspc.gc.ca)

## Planning and Reporting Framework

This Accessibility Plan represents a continuation of PHAC's commitment to accessibility and marks the beginning of the commitment to publicly monitor and report on progress. The planning and reporting cycle will meet or exceed the requirements under the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#).

### **Progress Reports**

PHAC is committed to ongoing consultation for future iterations of its Accessibility Plan and on its progress reports. Both the Accessibility Plan and the progress reports will outline how consultations occur. In addition, progress reports will contain information on the input received both through consultations and the feedback mechanism process.

## **Feedback Mechanism**

The primary method for monitoring barriers to accessibility and collecting input from employees and the public is through a feedback mechanism, a required component of the *Accessible Canada Act*. PHAC's feedback mechanism is a process for receiving and handling input on the Accessibility Plan and any accessibility barriers encountered when interacting with PHAC. The form to provide feedback is published on PHAC's page on Canada.ca, with a description of the process to submit the form.

The feedback received will be used to refine PHAC's commitments and activities to align with the needs of persons with disabilities and be reflected in the feedback section of future progress reports.

## **Performance Measurement**

In order to track progress on the accessibility commitments and activities, key performance indicators will be identified, encompassing the eight areas highlighted in this Accessibility Plan. Results will be updated as indicators are tracked within the Agency over time. Progress on PHAC accessibility levels will also continue to be assessed through the annual Public Service Employee Survey.

# Conclusion

This Accessibility Plan is part of the ongoing efforts and commitment to the long-term goal of a barrier free Canada by 2040. Every PHAC employee has a role in increasing accessibility awareness and contributing to an accessible by default workplace of inclusion and acceptance. At the same time, the Agency must ensure programs and services are accessible by design and developed in consultation with persons with disabilities.