2023

Public Health Agency of Canada Accessibility Progress Report

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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Foreword

Message from the President and Executive Vice-President

We are pleased to share with you the first Public Health Agency of Canada Accessibility Progress Report. This annual report demonstrates our ongoing commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion for all, including services we provide to Canadians as highlighted in the Public Health Agency of Canada 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan.

The focus in 2023 was to lay the groundwork and support a shift towards building a culture of accessibility and to begin to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. One example has been in our approach to the return to office. Under the new hybrid work environment, accommodations, including telework agreements, are being provided through a streamlined and simplified process for employees with disabilities. We all have a role in effecting change and together with our partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada Persons with Disabilities Employee Network, we have made progress, but there remains much work ahead. This report is only the beginning of our journey to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for everyone.

Thank you,

Heather Jeffrey
President of the Public Health Agency of Canada

Nancy Hamzawi
Executive Vice-President of the Public Health Agency of Canada

About the Public Health Agency of Canada

Public health focuses on the entire population at the individual and the community level. It encompasses a range of activities performed by all three levels of government (federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal) in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders and communities across the country.

The role of the Public Health Agency of Canada (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 (ART) at Health Canada (HC) is responsible for reporting on progress made in the implementation of the PHAC Accessibility Plan 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 reporting on feedback received.

To request this Progress Report, the PHAC Accessibility Plan, or the feedback process description in an alternate format, or to provide feedback, please contact the Director of ART, in one of the following ways:

Contact: Director of Accessibility Readiness Team

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

Toll free telephone: 1-833-725-2751

Facsimile: 1-613-941-5366

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

In 2022, PHAC launched a feedback mechanism to receive, acknowledge and address the feedback received about accessibility. Internal processes are also in place to monitor, report on, and incorporate the feedback related to barriers. Feedback received will be acknowledged in the same manner in which it was received unless it was submitted anonymously.

To submit feedback related to the Plan, Progress Report, feedback mechanism or accessibility barriers faced when dealing with PHAC, visit the Accessibility Feedback Form page.

Summary

The *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) requires all Government of Canada organisations publish an Accessibility Plan every three years, and a Progress Report in the years between Plans, that outline how organisations will remove barriers, and on the progress they are making to be barrier-free by 2040. This is PHAC's first Progress Report, and it outlines progress under the commitments and activities to identify, remove and prevent barriers in eight priority areas.

In keeping with the 'Nothing Without Us' accessibility strategy for the public service, which aims to build the Public Service into a model of what an inclusive and accessible employer can and should be, ART and the Offices of Primary Interest (OPIs) in consultation with the PHAC Persons with Disabilities Network (PWDN), developed realistic and achievable activities to address barriers in the eight priority areas. Themes emerged around access to training, internal resourcing support, subject matter expertise, and accommodation requests. These themes were incorporated where possible into the development of the activities towards improving accessibility, and many are already underway.

Along with its Accessibility Plan, PHAC launched a feedback process to enable employees and Canadians to share feedback on barriers faced when dealing with the Agency, or on the Accessibility Plan itself. Given the legislated deadline for publication, the feedback in this Progress Report covers the first eight months from publication of the Accessibility Plan; feedback for the remaining four months of this year will be covered in next year's report. Suggestions for improvements based on feedback and correspondence from the Office of the Accessibility Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission will guide PHAC's work to advance accessibility in the workplace, and within policies, programs and services. This feedback will also guide the development of the next Accessibility Plan, which will be published in 2025.

Areas in Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act

ART held consultations with the PHAC PWDN in 2023 on each of the eight priority areas within the Accessibility Plan to review and seek feedback on proposed activities. Through these consultations, and the feedback mechanism, PHAC designed, experimented and innovated to develop and implement realistic and achievable activities for year one — many of which are in progress or on-track.

Employment

PHAC's employment objective is centered on ensuring access to jobs and long-term career prospects for persons with disabilities. PHAC's commitments focused on working collaboratively with stakeholders on inclusive and accessible approaches, enhancing the recruitment experience of persons with disabilities, and providing an accessible and barrier-free workplace. In addition, the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results guide the work for all priority areas of accessibility and will be used to measure Agency progress in achieving the goals and commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan. The PSES is a critical tool that provides information to help improve people management practices in the federal public service.

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

- The Public Service Commission's *Guide to Mitigating Biases and Barriers in Assessments* is being applied to all staffing processes and PHAC implemented mandatory training for hiring managers on impartiality. This guide explains how hiring managers can evaluate their assessment methods to identify, remove or mitigate any potential biases or barriers to ensure fair assessments.

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

- PHAC continues to increase the overall representation of persons with disabilities. For the fiscal year 2022–23, and as part of the federal commitment to hire 5,000 net new persons with disabilities, the Agency met and exceeded its target of 21 net new hires of persons with disabilities by hiring 48. The Agency is on track to meet its target this year again with 16 of its 21 hires completed to date, representing 76% of the target. A large inventory of candidates identifying as a person with a disability is available to hiring managers seeking candidates at various groups and levels, and locations.

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

- PHAC has also added resources to support career mobility for employees with disabilities, including the launch in May 2023 of the Mentorship Plus Program matching employee candidates with sponsors. The program provides one on one advice on career development for candidates with disabilities.

The Built Environment

PHAC is working to modernize its built environment to meet or exceed accessibility standards by 2040. With many public servants returning to the office, focus has been on collaborating with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) regarding new facility accessible fit-ups and new construction; as well as engaging with internal and external stakeholders to identify and remove barriers.

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

Did You Know?

In Fall 2023, the AIMS (Accessible and Inclusive Meeting Spaces) project was piloted in one of the main boardrooms of the Agency, and is now fully accessible!

- In 2023, work was initiated to ensure that all new facility projects and renovations planned for PHAC will meet the requirements of the Act (and also additional above-code standards wherever possible). For existing PHAC facilities, an Accessibility Condition Review Program is being developed to identify opportunities for improvement. This program reviews the current accessibility measures at PHAC facilities, and will identify areas, and associated actions, for improvement.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

PHAC's ICT Accessibility Team has committed to strengthening the level of accessibility of new systems and applications for all users, improving support for the development and procurement of new software, and promoting accessibility awareness. The PHAC ICT Accessibility Team is working to acquire an inventory of existing PHAC websites to be assessed and prioritized. The Team is also committed to strengthening internal policies and procedures to support accessible ICT.

Commitment: 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.

- The PHAC ICT Accessibility Team is addressing these important commitments by continuing work to ensure all IT tools are accessible and available for all by default, starting with the inclusion of accessibility in Authority to Operate for new systems. This means that new ICT systems will be assessed for accessibility and will help identify any accessibility issues and their severity. This assessment will result in an Accessibility Impact Assessment that outlines the issues, risks and provides a recommendation on whether to move forward with implementation of the new system.

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

- PHAC is working to grow its ICT Accessibility Team to increase available services, including the addition of User Experience (UX) designers to ensure accessibility by design. The Team has also continued identifying accessibility gaps in policies and procedures, working with the appropriate teams to address them. This includes working with vendors to help them better understand accessibility requirements, which is especially crucial as all new software purchased must be accessible per PSPC rules of having all new software be accessible.

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

- The ICT Accessibility Team presented to senior executives, providing information and next steps for branches with regards to ICT Accessibility. The ICT team has also provided training sessions for users in areas such as the interpretation of Accessibility Conformance Reports and the use of screen readers. The Team continues to develop new courses and have also started creating buildbooks to put accessibility at the front end of the development process. These books provide developers with solutions to common accessibility problems found when using the technology, as well as instructions on how to build accessible solutions if it does not exist.

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

- PHAC is working to grow its ICT Accessibility Team to increase service and continue identifying accessibility gaps in policies and procedures, and to engage with the appropriate teams to address them. For example, the ICT team is working with the Technology Portfolio Office to introduce accessibility verification in the selection of tools via the Options Analysis process. In addition, PHAC is working with various teams to include a review for accessibility compliance in requests for software. This review would restrict the procurement of software that does not conform to the accessibility standard.

Communication, other than ICT

PHAC envisions an environment where everyone can readily access and understand communication materials; this means that content should be accessible by default, wherever possible. As part of this commitment, the Agency is working to provide products and organizing events in accessible formats.

Did You Know?

PHAC's Centre for Biosecurity develops its training courses to comply with all applicable Government standards and policies, including Digital Standards and Policy on Service and Delivery. This includes ensuring courses are accessible by design and have an easy-to-use interface. Training products use inclusive images and plain language. In addition, courses are made available to stakeholders and the public through the PHAC Training Portal, which is consistent with the openness and transparency requirements of the policy.

Commitment: Ensure PHAC external digital content and new internal digital content are accessible by default; and,

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

In 2023, PHAC implemented several measures to support this vision, including:

- Providing closed captions, described video, web equivalent information videos on social media and the PHAC website, and incorporating sign language when possible;
  - » 100% of videos produced have closed captions
- Supporting its teams through usability advice and guidance;
- Tracking web and social media content for accessibility and usability standards (part of ongoing implementation and regular business); and,
- Building accessible templates and tools (Word, PowerPoint).

The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The objective for PHAC procurement is to implement modern procurement practices for accessible goods, services, and facilities. In the Accessibility Plan, PHAC committed to incorporating accessibility into processes and documents, as well as increasing awareness of accessibility through training and guidance.

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

- In 2023, PHAC began an accessibility assessment of its tools and templates. PHAC is also ensuring that procurement officers are informed of changes to the pending PSPC procurement tools.

The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

PHAC's objective is that programs and services are designed in consultation with persons with disabilities and are accessible to all. In 2022, the Agency committed to building its internal capacity to better design and deliver programs and services in an accessible way.

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

- To improve the accessibility of PHAC's internal and external programs and services, the OPI focused on building internal capacity by identifying the teams within PHAC that deliver programs and services, with the goal of creating a community of practice which will ensure strong collaboration, learning opportunities and sharing of best practices.

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

- PHAC has conducted consultations on this topic. More specifically, there was a virtual consultation session in March 2023 with persons with disabilities and they were given an option to provide written feedback as well. For the first year, PHAC focused on the coordination of the activities and steps needed and associated timelines to advance the workplan for programs and services priority area.

- PHAC also began to determine an approach to integrating a proposed requirement on accessibility-related considerations into PHAC Treasury Board submissions and Memorandum to Cabinet submissions through discussions with corporate partners. PHAC has identified existing attestation processes for integrating accessibility considerations, such as the Sex and Gender-based analysis plus (SGBA+) attestation group. For processes already ongoing, discussions with corporate partners were initiated to include accessibility considerations within audits and evaluations.

Transportation

Assessing accessibility requirements for the PHAC fleet vehicles, focusing on current and future accessibility standards, and ensuring fleet purchases meets those standards were all identified as PHAC priorities in the 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan.

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

- In 2023, PHAC implemented a process for employees to access accommodations support when accessibility barriers are identified with the PHAC fleet in order to address and resolve them.

- This work will support PHAC's commitment to identifying potential accessibility features for new fleet vehicle acquisitions and implementing new accessibility standards as prescribed by the Treasury Board Secretariat and PSPC.

Culture

PHAC envisions a culture that supports all persons with disabilities, proactively eliminates and prevents barriers, and creates greater opportunities for persons with disabilities through a 'Nothing Without Us' approach. As a priority area in the 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan, PHAC committed to the promotion of an accessibility-informed culture that fosters an accessible work environment through trainings that cover topics such as document accessibility, accessible meetings and events and how to best support accommodation needs. The Agency is also committed to supporting employees so that they have the knowledge and tools to become accessibility confident which is defined as the ability of organizations to manage disability as a business priority related to customer experience, talent, productivity, innovation, new product development, brand reputation and investment in human potential.

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

> ### Did You Know?
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> In Fall 2023, a course called "Introduction to neurodiversity in the workplace" was piloted. This training for employees is designed as an introduction to the subject, enabling participants to review their perceptions and question their stereotypes. It also provides a grounding in the high-level universal inclusion model, and identifies how these principles can be applied to a neuroinclusion approach. The PHAC PWDN chairs were invited to this training to help determine if this initiative would be beneficial to all PHAC employees.

- PHAC has worked on developing and launching key activities to support this vision, and is in the final stages of creating an accessibility Playbook which will be shared with key stakeholders to receive feedback. The Playbook, a digital book, aims to increase accessibility awareness, knowledge and skills among PHAC employees, and to serve as a reminder that accessibility awareness is about more than compliance with the Act, it is everyone's responsibility.

- PHAC is also developing an Accessibility Hub on the Intranet (internal network for employees), and launched an accessibility icon on the desktop of every employee that links directly to the Hub, a centralized repository allowing quick and easy access to accessibility resources and tools.

- Further, PHAC developed a digital banner to broadly promote this new icon across Health Television (HTV) which broadcasts to 19 televisions located in various offices across Canada.

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

- PHAC is in the final stages of completing a communications and engagement strategy to support a transition to an accessibility culture. The next steps will be to implement the strategy which will guide how the Agency engages with internal and external stakeholders, such as the PWDN internally and disability-focused organizations externally. PHAC looks forward to building on the lessons learned and equipping its teams for success. PHAC also sought best practices and guidance with other departments who are also in the process of advancing the accessibility culture shift.
- PHAC is collaborating with the PWDN to deliver a yearly event for all employees, in recognition of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which occurs every year on the 3rd of December.

Consultations

PHAC is proud to have collaborated, and continues to collaborate with the PHAC PWDN on the development and publication of this first Progress Report. It is worth noting that the PHAC PWDN has recurring meetings with its membership at large and these meetings are opened to all PHAC employees.

In this inaugural year of implementing the Agency's Accessibility Plan, consultations with persons with disabilities have guided efforts to address accessibility barriers through the co-development and implementation of meaningful and impactful activities with the OPIs. In keeping with the 'Nothing Without Us' strategy, there were a series of consultations and touchpoints, including:

- ART and the PHAC PWDN meet monthly to establish common goals and objectives, to gather feedback, and to outline and solidify engagement opportunities.
- ART hosts a monthly director-level Forum for the PWDN and OPIs to collaborate, advance commitments and provide feedback.
- The PWDN executive are also active participants in various corporate working groups.

- ART supported the delivery of a consultation on a draft implementation plan, which outlines activities to meet the commitments in the Accessibility Plan and indicators to measure progress, in order to capture and address feedback on possible barriers, including activity measurement, and to ensure that it resonated with persons with disabilities.
  - » Attendees were provided with the draft working document in advance of the consultation session; they were encouraged to submit feedback via their preferred medium of choice.
- The PHAC PWDN executive committee were included in the governance approval process for the publication of this report.

Themes that emerged in 2023 were centered on knowledge about accessibility; including access to training, internal resourcing support, subject matter expertise, and accommodation requests or inquiries, to name a few. This feedback was considered, and incorporated where possible, in the development of strategic activities. PHAC recognizes that addressing barriers is an ongoing process and will be key to developing accessibility competence, and future commitments and activities.

PHAC Persons with Disabilities Network

PHAC has a very active persons with disabilities employee network, which plays an important role in outreach and raising awareness of accessibility needs and is integral in addressing them. At PHAC, the PWDN consists of a full time Chair, a Vice-Chair and 5 employees on the Executive Committee who each dedicate up to 5 hours per week towards Network activities. These passionate members work on Agency and government wide events, support the persons with disabilities community and develop proposals to improve the working conditions of employees with disabilities.

The PWDN works closely with the Health Canada PWDN to help advance accessibility within both organizations. The two Networks hold monthly listening sessions to hear from employees on challenges and objectives they'd like the Networks to address. The two Networks co-led two events for National Accessibility Awareness Week, the first on the built environment, which showcased the PHAC inclusive meeting space and promoted the ongoing initiatives to make the workplace more accessible throughout both organizations. The second event was focused on raising awareness of neuro-diverse employees and how colleagues could best support them. Each year the Networks organize an event for International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

The PHAC PWDN organized two events for National disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2023. These events raise awareness to managers and employees on challenges faced by the PWD community and best practices for supporting employees.

Accessibility Steering Committee

The Accessibility Steering Committee is a forum of senior executives from both PHAC and HC, including the PWDN Chairs and Champions (an executive each from PHAC and HC), that oversees, supports and provides guidance on the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act* and the Accessibility Plans to advance accessibility within both organizations.

Feedback

Along with its Accessibility Plan, PHAC also launched a feedback mechanism tool to allow agency employees and Canadians to share feedback on barriers faced when dealing with PHAC, or on the content of the Accessibility Plan. This feedback will guide the Agency to improve the development and implementation of the next PHAC Accessibility Plan to be published in 2025.

How Feedback was Collected

PHAC can receive accessibility feedback from the public and employees through various channels. Both employees and Canadians were invited to share their accessibility feedback via an online form available to the public on Canada.ca, or by email, telephone, letter mail, or fax. In addition, PHAC employees can submit their accessibility feedback via an internal online form, or could email ART directly.

To bring awareness of the different ways to provide accessibility feedback, PHAC's outreach initiatives included a January 2023 social media campaign on the government's Healthy Canadian's Facebook page, and PHAC LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter) accounts. Additional outreach to employees included ongoing promotion of the internal feedback process in the Agency's news bulletin and internal emails.

What We Heard

For this reporting period, starting from publication date of the Accessibility Plan in December 2022 through to the end of the first eight months of 2023, PHAC received a total of 9 individual feedback submissions. The balance of the feedback for the last 4 months of 2023 will be included in the next Progress Report. For this first year, all of the feedback received was via the employee or public online feedback forms. With greater awareness and promotion of the Accessibility Plan and the Progress Reports, it is anticipated that PHAC will receive feedback through the other channels (fax, letter mail etc.).

Feedback received often targets multiple priority areas. For example, the feedback mechanism received one feedback submission concerning different barriers having to do with both the built environment and culture, which are two different priority areas. This would be counted as one piece of feedback concerning built environment as a barrier, and another concerning culture as a barrier. As a result, the count of feedback for each priority area will be higher than the count for barriers received.

Of the 9 individual feedback submissions PHAC received in this reporting period, 7 were from PHAC employees and 2 were from the public. From these 9 submissions, a total of 14 barriers were identified. The breakdown of the number of barriers per priority area from all sources is shown in the table below.

Barriers identified by priority area

Priority area	Number of Barriers Identified
Employment	3
Built Environment	1
Information Technology	1
Communications	3
Procurement	1
Transportation	0
Programs and Services	3
Culture	2
Total	**14**

After reviewing the feedback, given that accessibility concerns crossed multiple priority areas and that barriers impacted persons with disabilities in varying ways, this first Progress Report groups the feedback according to themes.

One of the challenges of grouping the feedback into themes was that most of the feedback for the eight priority areas were general opinions or comments about nonspecific barriers at the Government of Canada and were not specific to PHAC. ART does share all feedback with the appropriate OPIs, however, if the comments were too generic or anonymous, the OPIs were unable to fully address the barriers.

Below is a summary of key themes identified as barriers for each priority area and the actions to address the barriers.

Employment

PHAC continues to work on improving the way it recruits and supports employees with disabilities so it truly is a diverse and inclusive workplace. The comments about employment barriers were reviewed and grouped into the following theme:

- Return to office policy
  - » Barriers to seeking accommodations, remote work as a universal accessibility policy, inaccessible hybrid work agreement (HWA) form.

Actions:

- Actively include the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport in the PHAC process for accommodating injury, illness or disability. HC's Workplace Wellness Service Centre is a leader in the public service in providing advice and guidance to employees and their managers in the accommodation process. This includes accommodation requests that are due to the return to the office.

- Support the public service commitment to hire 5,000 persons with disabilities. The Specialized Recruitment Team for Persons with Disabilities will do this by managing an inventory of persons with disabilities applicants available to all hiring managers and working with external partner organization to source talent.

- Develop tools to enhance the recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities, including delivery of training and information sessions to hiring manager to demystify any barriers or concerns.

- ART has reached out to Treasury Board, the business owner of the HWA form. While TBS made every effort to produce a revised, accessible form, the updated HWA still had some challenges. With the release of an HWA portal in April 2023, the PHAC HR directorate removed the HWA form from circulation, directing employees to use the new portal.

Built Environment

PHAC will create accessible and inclusive design solutions so that all people can use physical spaces. Built environment received one comment in the following area:

- Inaccessible facilities/buildings
    - » Availability of accessible bathrooms in all government buildings.

Actions:

- Continue to collaborate with key partners and the PWDN to potentially scale up the Accessible and Inclusive Meeting Spaces (AIMS) project to additional offices across Canada in the future.
- Washrooms within PHAC facilities (owned and managed by PHAC) are all wheelchair accessible. In buildings which are owned or operated by a private landlord or by PSPC, and where there are washrooms outside of PHAC space, PHAC actively advocates (to PSPC or the landlord) for updates to these washrooms. It is up to the landlord or PSPC as to whether these washrooms are updated.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

PHAC is working towards applying the principles of accessibility by design when purchasing goods and services. Procurement received one comment in the following area:

- Purchase of accessible goods, services and facilities
    - » Vendors to provide better return policies on ergonomic equipment.

Actions:

- The purchasing and return policies of external vendors are currently outside of the control of PHAC.
- PHAC will continue to ensure the intended outcomes of procurement follow the Directive on Management of Procurement guidelines.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

PHAC aims to update its digital services and make them more accessible. ICT received one comment in the following area:

- Accessibility friendly hardware and software
    - » Computer software and hardware that is easy to use

Actions:

- Continue to collaborate with IT Service Management Systems and assets to explore options for producing a catalogue of accessible software.

- Work is underway to ensure that aging IT assets, such as MECS (a software application used internally to track documents), is replaced with a new system that includes accessibility as a critical element to its functionality.

- Participate in the development of the Government of Canada's ICT Accessibility Standard and Accessibility Scorecard which collects data about the level of integration of accessibility in Government of Canada technology. It also measures compliance with the new Treasury Board Standard on accessible ICT.

Communications

PHAC will continue to meet all accessibility standards for internal and external web content. The comments about communications barriers were summarized into the following themes:

- Using plain and simple language
  - » Government of Canada websites being very text heavy and difficult to navigate
- Accessible general communications
  - » Easy access to software programs that corrects language and vocabulary, sign language training

Actions:

- Continue to adhere to all Government of Canada's policies and directives when putting content on government webpage to ensure that there are no barriers to accessibility. These include: The Policy on Communications and Federal Identity that states content must meet web accessibility guidelines. PHAC also follows the Directive on the Management of Communications which specifically states that the Agency should use plain language. Additionally, PHAC follows the Canada.ca Content Style Guide, which was written to complement The Canadian Style.

> ### Did You Know?
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> PHAC's Centre for Biosecurity's online and mobile products and tools meet web accessibility standards. The recently launched 3rd Edition of the Canadian Biosafety Standard and related mobile app considered accessibility in its design with descriptions of images as well as choice of colours in all of its images.

- PHAC promotes accessibility training and is working on growing its portfolio of learning so employees have the tools to make all communications accessible.

Transportation

Transportation at PHAC refers to the fleet of vehicles it owns, leases, or rents that are used by employees to carry out their work. No feedback was received for this reporting period.

PHAC will continue to support and adhere to accessibility standards for the PHAC fleet.

Programs and Services

PHAC strives to create and implement accessible programs and services. The comments about barriers in programs and services were summarized into the following theme:

- Policies relating to programs and service accessibility
  - » Waiting for ergonomic equipment or is not the right fit; accommodation for secondary locations

Actions:

- Review the channels used by clients to better identify gaps in program and service standards and improve accessibility.
- Explore options to develop a programs and services distribution list to quickly share best practices and current standards.

Culture

PHAC aims to create a culture that is accessible by default. The comments about barriers to culture were summarized into the following theme:

- Increasing awareness of accessibility
  - » Management has limited understanding about accommodations and removing barriers

Actions:

- Develop a communications and engagement strategy in support of the PHAC Accessibility Plan, Progress Report & commitments to raise awareness about accessibility.
- Coordinate the development of the Accessibility Plans and the Progress Reports with PHAC branch champions, OPIs and the PWDN.

- Explore and support options to establish mandatory accessibility training for all PHAC employees. In the fall of 2023, ART reviewed a course titled Accessibility Matters, developed by the internal MyLearning team, to evaluate its relevance for PHAC employees as a mandatory course.
- Tools were developed and disseminated amongst managers and employees, such as the Playbook, which is a digital book, and the Accessibility Hub, a centralized source of information available on PHAC's intranet, which can be easily accessed through a desktop icon.

Canadian Human Rights Commission, Accessibility Commissioner

In addition to feedback from the public and employees, PHAC received correspondence from the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) — Accessibility Commissioner's Office, identifying areas of improvements in the consultation process for the Accessibility Plan, as well as the formatting thereof.

The CHRC also conducted a Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) inspection of the web pages containing the Accessibility Plan and feedback tool. CHRC produced a Findings Report, and found that the URLs for the Accessibility Plan and feedback process description meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA conformance.

PHAC was pleased to have participated in both of these assessments and looks forward to learning about best practices and ongoing advancement of accessibility within the public service. The Agency will take all feedback from the CHRC to continually improve the way in which PHAC plans for, and reports on, accessibility.

PHAC is committed to working with its partners, the PWDN and the CHRC to improve upon:

- Expanding strategies to include more consultations with both internal and external stakeholders with disabilities.
- Carefully reviewing all policies, practices, programs and services to remove existing or potential barriers in the eight priority areas.
- Clearly outlining the benchmarks in the Accessibility Plan that would enable progress in the implementation of the plan to be tracked.
- Further clarifying that feedback contributors will receive a response in the same method in which their feedback was submitted.
- Improving clarity on the feedback mechanism process.
- Working with the OPI leads and the PWDN to address the barriers and gaps identified in this report.

Conclusion

PHAC's first Progress Report serves as a starting point to guide the Agency's goal to be a leader in accessibility and inclusion. Thank you to all respondents for providing comments and feedback on the PHAC Accessibility Plan or barriers faced. As an employer and a service provider, PHAC is committed to creating a diverse, accessible and inclusive workplace. PHAC is committed to taking a 'Nothing Without Us' approach to involve colleagues and Canadians with disabilities to improve upon accessibility in the workplace, in policies, programs and services, and will continue to review the feedback received to improve upon Progress Reports and Accessibility Plans to meet the needs of people with disabilities.