



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada



# Accessibility Action Plan 2022 – 25 Progress Report

Women and Gender Equality Canada  
2023



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## Message from the Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), it is a privilege to introduce our 2023 Accessibility Action Plan Progress Report. Our vision to increase accessibility within Canada, and the public service at large, is an ongoing priority, and I'm proud to present our department's progress to date.

In 2023, WAGE adopted the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport, implemented innovative hiring practices, and undertook a review of our systems, software, and websites to remove barriers. We reviewed our corporate commitments to improve our emphasis on accessibility and established a Persons with Disabilities Network to guide our efforts, to help us continue to learn and to inform our work. The Network is supported by the Accessibility Champion, who is tasked with working with the entire management team and employees at large to advance accessibility at all levels of the organization.

Our results are based on the principle of [\*Nothing Without Us: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada\*](#) (the Strategy), including persons with disabilities in the development of the [\*Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025\*](#) and the preparation of our very first progress report. We sought feedback on the Plan through accessible forms of engagement and we are committed to become even more inclusive, as we continue to address persistent barriers.

Progress has been made over the past year, and at the same time, our work continues. We aspire to be an inclusive and accessible work environment that reflects the diversity of the people we serve.

As we move forward, we renew our commitment to continue our learning, to being innovative, and seeking continuous improvement.

We all play a role in breaking down barriers.

Frances McRae

Deputy Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth



## Message from the Accessibility Champion

As the Accessibility Champion, I am proud to stand at the forefront of Women and Gender Equality's (WAGE) commitment to enhance accessibility in Canada and within our public service. Our 2022-2025 Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025 (AAP) is a key element in this endeavour, outlining objectives, strategies, partnerships, and timeframes in compliance with the Accessible Canada Act.

This report outlines our progress in areas such as employment; built environment; information and communication technologies; communications; procurement of goods and services; design and delivery of programs and services; and transportation.

I'm proud of the tangible progress we have made. Our achievements in advancing accessibility are notable. We've increased the representation of persons with disabilities from 4.07% in 2022 to 8.6% in 2023; completed two universally accessible washrooms on the 10th floor of our Gatineau worksite; and successfully implemented the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport. Additionally, we established the Persons with Disabilities Network, to guide and ensure that our efforts toward accessibility are informed and effective, and so that department-wide solutions can be found.

Accessibility is the cornerstone of inclusion - it's a key step towards a barrier-free society that allows people with disabilities in all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life. It's a community responsibility, and we all have a role to play. Embedding accessibility as an integral part of our design and decision-making processes not only upholds the rights of individuals with disabilities but also foster a more welcoming environment for all.

Leila Boussaïd

Director General of Research, Data, and Intersectionality



## General

### Contact us

Contact the **Director General of Human Resources** to:

- provide feedback or ask questions
- request the accessibility plan in an alternative format, as described in subsection 8(2) of the [regulations](#)
- request descriptions of WAGE's feedback process in an alternative format, as described in subsection 9(5) of the [regulations](#)

#### By mail

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Attention: Director General, Human Resources

#### By phone

- Toll-free: 1-855-969-9922
- Local: 613-995-7835
- Teletypewriter (TTY): 819-420-6905

[Video Relay Service](#) (American Sign Language (ASL) or langue des signes québécoise (LSQ))

Operating hours are Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, excluding statutory holidays. Please note that there is no messaging service available.

**By email:** [Director General of Human Resources](#)

**Online:** [Feedback form](#)

Feedback can be submitted either with an identified contact or anonymously. We will acknowledge the receipt of all accessibility feedback in the same means by which it is received unless the feedback is received anonymously.

#### Alternate formats

The following formats may be available:

- Large print (larger, clearer font)
- Braille (a system of raised dots that blind or visually impaired people can read with their fingers)
- Audio format (recording of someone reading the text aloud)
- Electronic formats compatible with adapted technology



## Overview

This report was prepared by Human Resources Services Branch at WAGE in consultation and collaboration with the Persons with Disabilities Network, the Accessibility Champion, Communications, Labour Relations, Corporate Services, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Programs, and IT/Information Management.

WAGE's first Accessibility Action Plan was the driving force behind our collective effort to advance accessibility. Based on the seven priority areas required under the [Accessible Canada Act](#), the following progress areas for 2023 are highlighted below.

### Employment

- Developed and implemented corporate commitments to strengthen a culture of accessibility.
- Increased representation of persons with disabilities from 4.07% in 2022 to 8.6% in 2023.
- Implemented a streamlined ergonomic assessment process.

### Built environment

- Ensured all workspaces at the designated workplace in Gatineau are accessible.
- Ensured that the new Vancouver worksite will have accessible equipment once open.
- Implemented the new return-to-office directive with accessibility considerations.

### Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- Launched a new [intranet](#) with an accessibility lens, in consultation with diverse internal groups.
- Included accessibility considerations into the Departmental Plan on Service and Digital.
- Ensured accessibility features in Microsoft 365 are enabled on devices for all employees.

### Communication, other than ICT

- Adopted the [Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport](#).
- Identified a new Accessibility Champion and launched the Persons with Disabilities Network.
- Implemented a more stringent and accessible video posting package for WAGE's social media.

### Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

- Improved understanding of accessibility for procurement staff by participating in learning activities.
- Created an accessibility consideration form for the acquisition process.

### Design and delivery of programs and services

- Improved accessibility for the 'call for proposals (CFP) application guide'.
- Identified a case officer to support accommodation requests from managers.
- Added plain language proofing practices to processes to be used for all new training products.

### Transportation

- Shared information about parking and bike storage at WAGE offices.
- Provided a way for employees to provide feedback about parking and commuting.



## Progress

We have moved forward since launch of our first action plan and are pleased to put forward WAGE's initial annual progress report. This past year was one of continued listening and learning to advance accessibility efforts within the department and foster a more accessible workplace and culture. While we have taken concrete actions towards real, systemic change, there is much more work to be done.

The Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025 (AAP) focuses on the seven priority areas of the Act and is informed by ongoing consultations with persons with disabilities. This progress report highlights actions and sub-activities that were designed to remove barriers and create better conditions for persons with disabilities within WAGE over the past year.

## Employment

Goal: improve recruitment, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities.

1. Examine accommodation processes to increase timeliness and quality of service, and to move to a yes-by default approach.
  - Labour Relations team conducted an analysis of the **duty to accommodate** (DTA) process in spring 2023 and determined that the Government of Canada's five-step DTA process as an effective process for WAGE.
  - A **new ergonomic assessment process** was developed and implemented, which included information sessions for all employees. This led to an increase in ergonomic assessment requests and improvements in timeliness.
2. Hold recruitment processes focused on persons with disabilities to fill identified gaps, and access government-wide programs to achieve this goal.
  - The Staffing team **established various fully qualified pools** of persons with disabilities and members of other equity groups. For example, EC-04 and EX-01 pools are active and always referred to hiring managers. This EX-01 pool is accessible by all departments across Canada to increase opportunities for the qualified candidates.
  - WAGE hosted a kiosk representing different job opportunities at Employment and Social Development Canada's **virtual job fairs for persons with disabilities** in 2022 and 2023. As most applicants did not meet the bilingual profile required, WAGE is addressing this barrier by creating bilingual non-imperative appointments.
3. Identify and establish hiring/recruitment and promotion goals and plans based on context, staffing requirements, and gaps to significantly increase departmental representation for the public service to achieve a goal of 7% representation of persons with disabilities by 2025.
  - A staffing plan was developed in May 2022, and a staffing strategy is underway for 2023. Activities from this plan included promoting [the Virtual Door to Talent with Disabilities](#) and establishing an approval committee for non-employment equity appointments. A process to monitor progress on the staffing plan and strategy was done in quarterly meetings with all directors general. We have seen an increase in the hiring of persons with disabilities from 4.07% in the 2021 to 2022 fiscal year to 8.6%, as of September 2023.





4. Ensure that anyone involved in the hiring process completes the following training: Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce (COR120; formerly H205).
  - Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce (COR120) is now part of the **mandatory list of training** for anyone involved in hiring processes and with HR sub-delegation. This is monitored to ensure timely completion. Approximately 85% of the 68 employees that completed the training in the 2022 to 2023 fiscal year were in supervisory or managerial positions.
  - Awareness among all employees and potential candidates regarding WAGE's **commitment to inclusive hiring** was raised through job posters and the staffing plan. The goal is to create a safer space for potential equity-deserving candidates and make WAGE jobs more appealing so candidates can apply with confidence that the selection committee will be trained in unconscious bias.
5. Develop a process and allocate resources regarding adjustments or accommodations during the staffing process.
  - A **process for accommodation requests during staffing** processes was implemented. All HR advisors participated in virtual, in-house training in March 2023. They are now better equipped to identify appropriate resources and support requests in a respectable timeframe.
  - An HR advisor has been identified as an **ambassador** that keeps the staffing team informed about meetings with the Public Service Commission (PSC) regarding accommodation requests. A back-up ambassador has also been identified.
6. Build accessibility considerations into departmental human resources plans and all other plans.
  - Actions from the Accessibility Action Plan were into the staffing strategy. **Corporate commitments were developed and implemented** to strengthen culture that fosters accessibility. Performance agreements for all employees in the 2023 to 2024 fiscal year include a mandatory minimum of four hours of training or learning activities related to diversity, inclusion, accessibility, wellness, mental health, or resilience. This includes the mandatory Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) course [Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility \(INC115\)](#).
7. Develop guidance documents and tools for hiring managers.
  - A **new staffing page** on the intranet launched in January 2023 and includes information concerning accommodations, such as tools for hiring managers from the PSC. Hiring managers are better equipped and more aware of the importance of accommodations, which has led to most accommodation requests being approved.
  - **New tools** on detecting and mitigating biases and barriers in staffing processes were added on the Intranet in July 2023. These tools are mandatory for all advertised and non-advertised staffing processes.
8. Establish an accessibility sub-committee within the Diversity and Inclusion Committee (including employees with disabilities) to review and identify gaps when needed to be more accessible and inclusive.
  - The **Persons with Disabilities Network** was launched by the Accessibility Champion and chair in June 2023 and promoted during National Accessibility Week. The network has its own [positional mailbox](#) and a page on the intranet promoting its community, including its terms of reference. The network has 18 members, including 2 co-chairs and a secretary. The network meets monthly.



## Built environment

Goal: Enhance the accessibility of the built environment.

1. Review the built environment in consultation with persons with disabilities (employees, clients, and other people who regularly conduct business in buildings).
  - **Improvements in accessibility** at the Gatineau worksite include solid hardwood doors from common hallways being replaced with hardwood doors that include windows, touchless accessibility buttons installed on almost every door, installing departmental signs on the 10th and 11th floors, and the completion of two all-access (universal) washrooms on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. These washrooms were developed with the assistance of an accessibility consultant and built under the guidelines of the *Quebec Construction Code*.
2. Review the new built environment in consultation with persons with disabilities (employees, clients, and other people who regularly conduct business in the building) in regional workspaces to identify how it could be more accessible and inclusive.
  - OHS and Facilities ensured that the **new Vancouver worksite** will have accessible desks, chairs, monitor arms, lockers, a first aid kit, a microwave, and a fridge. The worksite's design and floor plans have been approved for implementation.
  - OHS reviewed all workspaces in **Moncton, Montreal, and Edmonton**. All workspaces were found to be accessible. Virtual support was received to review these regional offices. Departmental signage was installed in Moncton. A request for the assessment of the Moncton location has been paused because of possible relocation. Corporate Services has requested an accessibility assessment through PSPC for the Edmonton location as of August 2023. A response from PSPC to start the process to request an accessibility assessment for the Montreal location is outstanding.
3. Actively promote accessibility features and services offered in workspaces and public-facing spaces.
  - Corporate Services identified **personnel on-site to guide/orient employees** in all offices. At the beginning of the return to the office, an office coordinator provided six guided tours and four information sessions to employees. Managers and administrative support are now responsible for this service.
  - In January 2023, Internal Communications and WAGE at Work (the return-to-office working group, stylized as WAGE@Work) established a communications strategy and plan for **implementing the new directive on returning to the office with accessibility considerations**. This included creating an intranet page with all relevant information for hybrid work, which is linked from the intranet's home page for easier access. Awareness was raised regarding equipment available to hybrid workers through two emails, three articles in WAGE World (the internal newsletter), and published information on the intranet.
4. Ensure that events and meetings are accessible to all employees and, where applicable, the public.
  - **Awareness was raised** regarding Microsoft (MS) Teams' accessibility features and best practices for hybrid meetings in WAGE at Work emails, in WAGE World, and on the WAGE at Work and IT intranet pages. **Feedback is collected** on an ongoing basis through an employee survey on the return to the office.

## Information and communication technologies

Goal: Make information and communication technologies usable by all.



1. Ensure that accessibility considerations are included in the departmental IT plan.
  - The Departmental Plan on Service and Digital **includes accessibility considerations** and was signed by the Deputy Minister in June 2023. Consultations for this plan included 15 people across 9 directorates.
2. Integrate and partner with Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) programs in order to offer a wide range of adaptations, alternate approaches, tools, training, services, resources, and adaptive computer technologies for employees with disabilities.
  - WAGE has utilized AAACT's services for guidance and support on accessibility tools for employees.
3. Review systems, software, websites, and equipment to ensure that they are accessible, and develop a plan to address barriers.
  - Communications and IT implemented a **strategy for WAGE's external website** to undergo a three-phase refresh, including an accessibility review. Phases 1 and 2 were completed in 2023 and included an updated home page and redesign of the Gender-based Violence section and 2SLGBTQI+ section. As the website moves to a content management system, the website will continue to ensure a high level of accessibility for all users.
  - A **new intranet** developed with an accessibility lens, and in consultation with diverse internal groups, was launched in January 2023.
4. Ensure accessibility features can be enabled on devices.
  - IT has ensured that accessibility features in MS 365 are enabled on devices for all employees.
5. Provide and promote resources for employees to generate (internal and external) accessible content with common tools (e.g., Microsoft Office).
  - IT encourages the use of accessibility functions in MS 365. Training offered by AAACT is also shared through WAGE World and the new Accessibility intranet page.
6. Adopt measures and procedures to enable accessible, inclusive, and barrier-free IT equipment installations.
  - **Accessibility features are enabled** and available for use at WAGE workstations (e.g., Read Aloud and speech-to-text in MS Office) and for WAGE mobile phones (e.g., visibility, talkback and hearing enhancements, interaction and dexterity assistance, and other advanced options).

## Communication, other than information and communication technologies

Goal: Make communications accessible by all and build an accessibility-confident environment.

1. Provide content (e.g., documents) in accessible formats, where possible, to promote accessibility.
  - The Creative Services team ensures that all graphic design work receives an **accessibility review and testing for compliance** with AA or AAA accessibility standards for imagery and text. The team has also implemented a **more accessible video posting package** for use on WAGE's social media channels. This includes posting videos, captioning files, and transcripts on specific social media channels and advising on alternate options for channels that are less accessible (e.g., ensuring there is a descriptor in the post or a hyperlink to a transcript).



2. Develop an accessibility strategy to analyze barriers for persons with disabilities and develop an action plan.
  - The **Accessibility Action Plan** was published in December 2022. The Deputy Minister announced its publication in January 2023 and encouraged employees to share their feedback. It was also promoted in the January 2023 edition of WAGE World.
3. Identify an accessibility champion who will provide visible and sustained leadership in the development and launch of a network of employees with disabilities within the Department.
  - A director general became the **Accessibility Champion** to raise issues from employees with disabilities to higher levels of management and advocate for accessibility in the workplace. This was announced in an email by the Deputy Minister in May 2023. The Champion supports the [Persons with Disabilities Network](#) under the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee and supports the Accessibility Working Group, which works to collaborate and report on the Accessibility Action Plan.
4. Develop a process to ensure that concerns from employees with disabilities can be provided confidentially, including through the ombuds' office and confidential questionnaires.
  - HR develops **annual accessibility surveys** for employees with and without disabilities to share their experiences and perceptions of accessibility, barriers, and disability in the workplace in an anonymous way. The first survey launched in June 2022 and 30% of staff responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 26% identified as having a disability. A [pulse survey for the Persons with Disabilities Network](#) was shared in August 2023.
5. Identify, promote, and encourage training from the Canada School of Public Service and awareness-raising events, such as information sessions, to combat myths and remove stigma regarding disability.
  - HR and Internal Communications developed a **special edition of WAGE World** for National Accessibility Week in June 2023. This included a spotlight on one of WAGE's neurodivergent employees and their experiences. Internal Communications also launched a **new section** in WAGE World in April 2023 to share accessibility tips, tools, and resources.
6. Promote self-identification and self-declaration of employees with disabilities to reduce the stigma regarding disability and improve reporting on representation of persons with disabilities.
  - HR promotes the **self-declaration** of employees with disabilities by including it as a voluntary part of a checklist of staffing actions for new employees; 23% of employees that self-declared as belonging to one or more employment equity groups in the 2022 to 2023 fiscal year were persons with disabilities.
7. Develop tools for employees and managers to focus on developing inclusive and accessible environments from the start rather than seeking accommodations after the fact, including by implementing the Accessibility Passport from the beginning of the onboarding process.
  - WAGE has become an early adopter of the **Accessibility Passport**. An information session and workshops for managers were held in May 2023 on how to promote the use of the passport and how to better support employees through the accommodations process. A communications plan was developed for the passport, including a dedicated section on the intranet and tips on starting conversations about its use in WAGE World. An HR advisor, the chair of the Persons with Disabilities Network, and a co-chair **completed training with OPSA** about inclusive and accessible facilitation of information sessions and workshops for the Accessibility Passport in preparation for the internal sessions.



## Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Goal: Ensure the goods and services purchased are accessible by design, where possible, so that persons with disabilities can use them without adaptation.

1. Consider accessibility in the early stages of the procurement process so as not to create barriers for end users.
  - Procurement staff are participating in a suite of learning activities offered by CSPS (to be completed during the 2023-2024 fiscal year) to improve their understanding of accessibility and provide more effective programs and services.
    - [Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Procurement \(INC1-V33\)](#)
    - [Making Documents Accessible \(INC1-V46\)](#)
    - [Workplace Accommodation Consultation Series: Accessible Procurement \(INC1-V35\)](#)
    - [Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility \(INC115\)](#).

In addition, information is gathered on how to embed accessibility into the acquisition process with an accessibility consideration form.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

Goal: Ensure WAGE is equipped to design and deliver programs and services that are inclusive, accessible, and beneficial to all.

1. Build accessibility into all new policies and programs by applying the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) tool, which includes a disability lens and incorporates an accessibility and inclusion checklist.
  - The Programs team **added plain language proofing practices** so that plain language is used for all new training products.
2. Provide assistance to employees and managers in navigating the accommodation process in order to provide employees with the tools needed to do their job.
  - One **case officer** was identified and trained to support requests from managers and deliver training about (replace about with regarding) accommodations. Several DTA requests were submitted as managers became more aware of the [Treasury Board's DTA process](#).
3. Gradually assess internal programs, in consultation with persons with disabilities at WAGE, to identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.
  - The Programs team conducted an initial **accessibility review and revision** of the CFP application guide. It was revised to include only the most relevant information to reduce length. Plain language was used with the support of plain language editor applications. The guide also includes information about how to **request accommodations** for the application process (e.g., alternative formats of documents).
  - An **ongoing analysis** of the guide takes place after each CFP based on which questions were unclear to clients. Adjustments are made to the guide, as needed, such as rewording or providing more clarity with examples. The team records process improvements for all CFPs in a process improvement document.



## Transportation

Goal: Provide equitable and accessible transportation.

1. Share information about transportation services available near WAGE buildings (parking, cabs, public transport, and adapted transport).
  - The Internal Communications and Corporate Services teams have **shared information about parking and bike storage** at WAGE offices on the Intranet and in emails regarding returning to the office. Additionally, employees were provided with a way to give feedback about their experiences with parking and commuting in a return-to-office survey for the question, “What was the most difficult thing about returning to work in the office?”



## Consultations

In the spirit of *Nothing Without Us: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada* and in line with the requirements of the *Act*, WAGE held a voluntary information session and a voluntary consultation session with the Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN). For members of the network who wished to participate in other ways, an online survey was available to obtain their feedback.

The purpose was to gather information about lessons learned and progress accomplished throughout our first year of the implementation of the AAP 2022 – 2025 and challenges people with lived experiences are still facing when it comes to accessibility in the workplace and building a representative workforce.

### Our Path to Accessibility Collaboration

#### Phase 1: Information

**In July 2023**, an information session was provided to the network regarding the Accessibility Action Plan.

#### Phase 2: Survey

**From August 11 to 25, 2023**, members were provided an anonymous online accessibility survey as a potential alternative for employees who wished to make their opinion known but did not want to participate in the virtual consultation. For a copy of the guidance on consultations, please [contact HR's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility team](#). The survey was available in both official languages, had contact information for questions, used plain language, provided definitions and examples for clarity, and was available in alternative formats such as an MS Word document.

The following range of disabilities were represented as 33% of PwDN members at the time completed the survey: mobility, learning, hearing impairment, flexibility, mental health, chronic health or pain, cognitive, and communications.

#### Phase 3: Preparation

**In August 2023**, HR consulted the PwDN regarding how they wanted to be consulted. The network established a process for consultations that guided how the next phase in the consultation would be carried out, in a way that is inclusive and accessible and provides the option for anonymity. For a copy of the guidance on consultations, please [contact the IDEA team](#).

#### Phase 4: Consultation

**In September 2023**, HR held a virtual consultation through Zoom, in which 50% of PwDN members participated. During the consultation process trends and barriers ranging from behavioral to more systemic in nature surfaced.

## What We Heard

WAGE will consider what we heard about the AAP and analyze the feedback to assess what can be integrated into future accessibility actions. Below is a summary of the consultation. The consultation results are also being provided to all relevant OPIs to better inform their actions moving forward.

#### Retention and Advancement

We heard that there is a **need to revise the retention and promotion processes** within the Department. The PwD expressed an large sense of inequality when it came to their career advancement. PwD are more likely to be disadvantaged when it comes to accessing promotions thus creating a barrier to career advancement. Non-imperative bilingual positions hiring processes are a barrier for some PwD, as well as job posters can be bias and a barrier for some, such as the ability to effectively communicate orally and in



writing. PwD articulated that assessment materials should be reviewed to eliminate biases where some are found. Finally, special talent management plans for PwD might be a tool to help retain and promote employees with disabilities.

#### Accountability

We heard that there is a need for more awareness around what is currently being done about accessibility in the department and who the accountable parties (OPs) are. For example, there is a lack of understanding among employees of who is supporting in the creation of accessible communications.

#### Awareness and Learning

We heard that there is a need to **change common misconceptions**. PwD feel that managers have the perception that they are less competent than employees without disabilities.

We heard that there is a **need for training** on accessible documents, presentations, web content, and plain language, as well as **mandatory training** on AACT, the Workplace Accessibility Passport, and accommodation. PwD voiced that material used in the department is not always accessible.

We heard that there is a need to **increase awareness** on accessibility, ableism, invisible disabilities, duty to accommodate, Workplace Accessibility Passport, other guides and tools. PwD expressed anxiety and fear about disclosing to their manager or colleagues they have a disability. There is a need for safe spaces where all employees can feel proud of who they are.

#### Accommodations

We heard that there is a need to **create tools and resources** to help managers and employees with the ergonomic assessment and accommodation process. PwD shared that it is difficult to find information on the assessment and accommodation process.

We heard that there is a need to **integrate accessibility and accommodation into onboarding**.

#### Data Transparency

We heard that there is a **need for data transparency** when it comes to PwD's representation within the department, such as gaps within the organization, hiring, retention, and promotion numbers, as well as statistics on self-identification and self-declaration.

We heard that there is a need for a **self-identification awareness campaign**. PwD expressed some are reluctant to self-identify because they do not feel safe to do so and fear their privacy will not be respected. Additionally, they voiced that there are no promise of career stability or development for employees who self-identify and question what the incentives are if they self-identify.





## Feedback

Employees and members of the public are encouraged to [share their feedback](#), anonymously or otherwise, about our AAP, barriers experienced, or any matter related to accessibility via our [online feedback form](#). Individuals can consult the [Accessibility Feedback Process](#) for other ways to provide feedback and how we use your feedback.

A summary of feedback received, including potential solutions offered by employees and how they have been taken into consideration is described for each type of barrier below.

### Systemic and Attitudinal

- **Barrier** - People with invisible disabilities face attitudinal barriers in the workplace, which discourages them from requesting accommodation.
- **Action** - The reality of invisible disabilities in the workplace was discussed with the Accessibility Working Group. Actions taken included providing training and tools for managers to initiate conversations about the Accessibility Passport, establishing mandatory training about disabilities and accessibility, adding accessibility as an objective in managers' performance management agreements, and including resources and tools on the intranet for accessibility and the DTA process.

### Environmental

- **Barrier** - Long wait time for ergonomic assessment, office set-up, and equipment.
- **Action** - OHS addressed this by reviewing the ergonomic assessment process and implementing a new, streamlined process. HR also encouraged employees to discuss accommodation concerns with their direct supervisor using the Accessibility Passport.
- **Barrier** - Lack of dedicated quiet rooms, privacy of the quiet rooms, availability since they need to be reserved in advance, and an increase in noise and distractions in the workplace.
- **Action** - The current quiet rooms have been renamed focus rooms. Availability cannot be guaranteed, whether there is an option to book or not in advance. Two focus pods (not private rooms) are available on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor in Gatineau with no requirement to reserve. None of the rooms can be made completely private because of health and safety reasons.
- Corporate Services informed all employees in Gatineau that the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> floors, regardless of workspace, are available to all. Further communication to employees is required regarding how they can utilize these spaces.

### Communication

- **Barrier** - An image in the WAGE World newsletter that was also published to the intranet was not accessible; the image had text in it with all caps used.
- **Action** - Internal Communications identified a new image without text and did a text overlay, ensured the image had alt text, and communicated with their client that provided the image to inform them of these accessibility considerations, so they can improve future editions of the newsletter.



## Beyond 2023

Metrics and quantitative data to evaluate our performance is only part of the solution to becoming an accessible department. We must also evaluate behavior, feedback on efforts and accomplishments, as well as identify and address issues hindering our progress.

The Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025 is an evergreen tool that, with persistent action, will help us achieve a representative workforce and a workplace free of barriers for persons with disabilities. A key next step in our work is to revise the AAP based on consultations and collaboration with employees with disabilities, PwDN, key stakeholders, employees who have an interest in building an accessible workplace, managers, and bargaining agents. The goal is to ensure that our plan continues to reflect the views of the communities directly impacted in our workplace to ensure WAGE is accessible and inclusive. We will also develop a performance measurement framework that will support WAGE in tracking and reporting results on a more regular basis.

Consultation, collaboration, and communication are essential for the Evaluation of our accessibility journey. The IDEA Team will facilitate discussions with employees with disabilities, PwDN, OPIs, employees who have a vested interest in building an accessible workplace, managers, and bargaining agents.

1. In the next calendar year, stakeholders and contributors will **review the Accessibility Progress Report 2023**, discuss results, and develop solutions for barriers that continue to exist and new barriers that emerge.
2. HR will **facilitate a presentation of OPIs actions within their respected area** throughout the department. There will be a question-and-answer period in order allow collaboration to identify solutions and effective approaches to eliminate barriers.
3. HR will monitor and communicate progress with the PwDN and OPIs to promote transparency and collaboration.

## Words in motion

Words and actions in creating a fully accessible organization free of discrimination and oppression towards persons needing accommodation were formalized one year ago with the launch of the *Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025*.

**Re-commitment starts now;** let's recommit ourselves to creating a more inclusive workplace. We can do this by challenging our own biases, fostering a culture of empowerment and safety for employees with disabilities, engaging at all levels of the department, and promoting open dialogue on accessibility.

**Transformation never stops;** let's build a new and improved future for all. When we acknowledge that change is essential, transformation happens.

**Let's keep our words in motion;** we are only as good as our actions. Our words are the foundation in building relationships, integrity, and trust. We all play a role in breaking down barriers; improving inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility across the department will require rigorous effort in the coming years.



# Glossary

## **Accessibility:**

The degree to which a product, service, program, or environment is available to be used or accessed easily by persons with and without disabilities. Improving accessibility helps everyone participate fully and equally in society and realize their full potential.

## **Accommodation (adjustment):**

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

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

Accommodations (adjustments) can be temporary, periodic, or long-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace.

## **All-access (universal) washrooms:**

Single-stall washrooms that are gender-neutral and have enhanced accessibility requirements. Universal washrooms grant a diverse range of people (in particular, trans and non-binary people and persons with disabilities) privacy, and the ability to avoid potential harassment in gendered washrooms. Additionally, universal accessible washrooms reduce barriers for people with disabilities, people who require aid or accompaniment, families, and anyone who has an enhanced need for privacy or physical space.

All of these washrooms' fixtures (toilet, faucet, soap dispenser, paper towel dispenser, and toilet paper dispenser) are touchless. A swipe of your hand will allow you to enter and exit. The lights are automatically activated once the door is open, and the door will automatically lock shortly after entrance. There is also an emergency button with communication to the commissionaires for assistance if required.

## **Assistive Devices:**

Means any piece of equipment or any product used to remove barriers to accessibility of or for persons with disabilities.

## **Barrier:**

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 an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

## **Bias:**

A preconceived judgment that is held by a person and that influences their perception of or their behaviour towards another person or group of people.



**Disability:**

A broad category that encompasses a wide range of impairments, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, visible or invisible, that hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

**Diversity:**

The inclusion of different types of people. A diverse workforce in the public service is made up of individuals who have an array of identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, perspectives, and experiences that are representative of Canada's current and evolving population.

**Inclusion:**

The act of including someone or something as part of a group. An inclusive workplace is fair, equitable, supportive, welcoming, and respectful.

Inclusion recognizes, values, and leverages differences in identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences, and perspectives that support and reinforce Canada's evolving human rights framework.

**Persons with disabilities:**

Persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment and who a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or b) believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment.

Persons with disabilities include persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace.