



Moving Forward Together: Update on Progress in Public Service Accessibility, 2022

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Moving Forward Together: Update on Progress in Public Service Accessibility (2022)

From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

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1. Introduction from the Secretary of the Treasury Board

As the Secretary of the Treasury Board, I am pleased to share the third annual update on the implementation of “Nothing Without Us”: An Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada.

As the largest employer in the country, the Government of Canada is committed to being an accessible employer and service provider. In 2019, we launched the Accessibility



Strategy to help the federal public service lead by example in accessibility in Canada and abroad.

Graham Flack
Secretary of the
Treasury Board

Work on implementing the Accessibility Strategy continues.

We shared some of the early successes and challenges in our first two [progress reports](#). In 2020, we looked at the initial steps taken to improve accessibility in the public service amid the global pandemic. In 2021, we offered a frank assessment on where gaps persist, and progress is slow.

This year's update, "Moving Forward Together," looks at collaboration underway throughout the federal government to design, experiment and innovate in accessibility in 2022 and at how we are working to make accessibility part of our everyday work.

In the following pages, you will learn about accessibility initiatives being developed through collaboration and innovation. You will also find "spotlights" that give examples of how these initiatives are making a difference for people every day.

I encourage all public servants to continue working to make our shared vision of a barrier-free and accessible public service a reality. Each of us has a role to play in creating a more accessible and disability-inclusive Canada. Stay engaged, be curious and open to learning, and let's keep moving forward together.

Graham Flack

Secretary of the Treasury Board

2. Message from the Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities

This fall, I was named Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities in the Public Service. It is with great humility and excitement that I take on this role and aspire to support the development of a federal public service where persons with disabilities feel fully included.

The former Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities, Yazmine Laroche, led this vibrant, talented and dedicated community over the past few years. I am honoured to take over from her for the next chapter with this community and to continue the work she led with such passion and dedication.



**Tina
Namiesniowski**
Champion for
Federal Employees
with Disabilities

According to the most recent *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada Report 2020-2021*, 5.6% of employees in the core public administration identify themselves as having a disability.

Disability includes a wide range of realities, and the contributions of employees with disabilities to the public service and to Canadians are rich and varied. As we work together to create an accessible and inclusive public service, we create the conditions for people with all types of disabilities to thrive. Across our institutions, employees with disabilities contribute significantly—from leading major projects and developing policies to providing frontline services to Canadians.

As public servants, we all have a role in breaking down barriers and in challenging ourselves, our peers and our leaders to think about accessibility in everything we do.

I look forward to the coming year, as we continue to harness the richness of our collective experience to move forward together in building a barrier-free public service as the foundation for a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

Tina Namiesniowski

Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities

3. Progress and challenges in 2022

► In this section

This year marks three years since the launch of the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service. Departments and agencies have continued working together to support employees with disabilities and to make the public service more accessible.

As they expanded to more organizations, projects like the [GC Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) reached even more employees with disabilities this year.

New direction and guidance was released to help departments and agencies in their efforts to become more accessible, including [guidance on creating accessibility plans](#), the [Guidelines on Making Communications Products and Activities Accessible](#) and the [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#).

We also conducted experimentation and tested innovations. For example, we tested new ways of collecting data, piloted new recruitment and talent retention initiatives, and tried out new tools to make the workplace more accessible and inclusive.

This progress update highlights promising examples of how we can remove barriers and create the conditions for employees with disabilities, and all employees, to succeed in the public service. Although we celebrate this progress, we still have a lot of work to do to achieve our goals.

Innovating our approaches to data

Data is a critical part of our work to make federal organizations more diverse, inclusive and accessible. Since we launched the strategy, we have taken many steps to address data gaps in accessibility. For example, in 2020 and 2021, we updated tools such as the [Management Accountability Framework](#) and the [Public Service Employee Survey](#) to collect new data on accommodations and workplace experiences for persons with disabilities.

This new data is giving us more insight into barriers in the public service. For example, the 2020 employee survey revealed that 23% of employees with a disability had experienced harassment in the previous 12 months and that 19% had experienced discrimination during the same period. Based on these findings, in October 2022, we launched a new research study on the experience of persons with

disabilities in the core public administration to better understand the causes and impacts of the barriers they face, and to identify recommendations for improving workplace conditions.

This year, we also made progress on testing and experimenting with new ways of collecting data. For example, we:

- finalized the updated digital self-identification questionnaire, which we will release in 2023; the questionnaire will help us better understand trends in workforce representation in the public service
- created a prototype of a data hub that will consolidate employment data from different departments and agencies to help measure progress on the Government of Canada's commitment to hire 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025
- shared best practices to help departments and agencies learn how to create indicators and measure progress on implementing their accessibility plans

While we have made good strides in data this year, challenges remain, for example, varied and decentralized data systems and lengthy data collection processes. We must continue to improve our data processes so that we can accurately measure progress.

► **Spotlight on the employee self identification form**

Attracting and retaining talent

The Accessibility Strategy aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, who remain underrepresented in the public service workforce.

Since 2020, we have launched several government-wide initiatives to recruit persons with disabilities into the public service. Examples include dedicated inventories, student programs, and campaigns to hire recent graduates.

We have also launched several targeted programs to support career development and increase the number of equity-seeking employees, including employees with disabilities, in the executive ranks. In 2022, the first cohort of 38 participants completed the Mosaic Leadership Program; 20% of them identified as having a disability.

Efforts this year to close representation gaps and improve the uptake of these initiatives across departments and agencies included:

- giving deputy heads updated workforce data, new hiring targets and tools for recruiting persons with disabilities
- encouraging departments and agencies to include commitments to hire persons with disabilities in their first accessibility plans, which are due on December 31, 2022
- launching pilot projects, such as the Neurodiversity Recruitment Pilot and the Neurodiversity E-Learning Pilot, to test new approaches to hiring and retaining neurodivergent talent

Despite this progress, representation of persons with disabilities in the public service remains significantly lower than workforce availability, and progress toward hiring 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025 is slow.

Initiatives like the Neurodiversity Recruitment Pilot offer a promising model for inclusive practices that create a welcoming, barrier-free workplace and help recruit and retain persons with disabilities.

The work to attract and retain top talent with disabilities is far from complete. More departments and agencies must start using the new hiring tools, and we need to decide on next steps so that we can expand successful projects to reach more people.

► Spotlight on the Neurodiversity Recruitment Pilot

Creating accessible and inclusive workspaces

To become an accessible and inclusive public service that attracts and retains top talent, we must also have accessible tools and equipment. In 2022, we launched or tested projects that help equip employees with the tools or environments they need to succeed.

The Centralized Enabling Workplace Fund continues to help the public service experiment with innovative accommodation solutions. For example, the fund is supporting the creation of an Indigenous Accessibility Resource Centre that will provide guidance on culturally appropriate workplace accommodations for Indigenous federal public servants with disabilities. This project is expected to launch in December 2022.

The GC Workplace Accessibility Passport also continued to expand in 2022. The passport is now available to employees with disabilities in 20 departments and agencies. Work is also underway to develop a digital passport.

► **Spotlight on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport**

Work to improve the Government of Canada's information and communication technology infrastructure also continued. For example, under an agreement with Microsoft Canada, Shared Services Canada (SSC) continues to offer federal public servants access to the accessible digital communication and collaboration tools of Microsoft Office 365. To maintain and promote accessibility, SSC is tracking problems with accessibility and is working with Microsoft and partner departments to resolve them.

As employees return to the workplace, addressing barriers in physical workspaces remains a priority. Several pilot projects this year tested accessible solutions at worksites, including:

- a pilot to test new lighting solutions
- a pilot project to test interactive signage for navigating indoor spaces
- a contactless elevator pilot project

Another innovative initiative, at 22 Eddy Street in Gatineau, is helping identify low-complexity, low-cost updates to federal worksites. It is also looking at more complex, long-term design upgrades that can help improve accessibility.

Significant barriers still exist in the physical workplace and in the tools we use. Complex projects like renovating worksites and creating cross-government tools such as the digital GC Accessibility Passport require years of design work, testing and collaboration. Despite the complexity, which sometimes means that redesign is needed, we must do our best to stick to project timelines.

As we make the transition from remote-by-default work to hybrid work as public health restrictions permit, we must make sure the workplace is accessible for all employees. We know through engagement and consultations that employees with disabilities can face added barriers in a hybrid model, for example, cumbersome accommodation processes. Hybrid models must be accessible by default.

► **Spotlight on 22 Eddy Street, Gatineau**

Embedding accessibility into policies and practices

By embedding accessibility into policies and practices, we will make workplaces more inclusive and will create more accessible systems, programs and services. Key policy work this year included:

- releasing guidelines on making communication products and activities accessible
- continuing to develop a standard on accessible information and communication technology for federal public service departments and agencies
- developing a new standard on systems that manage information and data that includes requirements for accessibility
- Publishing Guidance on Optimizing a Hybrid Workforce: Spotlight on Telework to promote a barrier-free workplace through flexible and equitable working arrangements and to support organizations in fostering a diverse, inclusive and productive workforce

Work is also underway to update the Duty to Accommodate: A General Process for Managers by 2023 to support a proactive approach to accommodation. The update includes an appendix on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport that will provide guidance to managers on how they can support employees with the passport and facilitate the workplace accommodation process.

Functional communities and employee networks across the public service are also helping turn policy updates into everyday practice. This year, the Accessibility Community of Practice expanded and now has members from accessibility teams in more than 60 departments and agencies. Other groups, like the Plain Language Community of Practice and the GC Workplace Accessibility Community of Practice, have continued to meet regularly to share best practices.

Employee networks like the Indigenous Employees with Disabilities Network and the Interdepartmental Network of Accessibility and Disability Chairs are supporting culture change, co-developing solutions and discussing intersectionality, stigma and systemic issues in the workplace and in our services to Canadians.

New accessibility regulations and standards are on the horizon and will help departments and agencies, and all federally regulated sectors, become accessible by default. We will need to review operational policies like the duty to accommodate to make sure they are applied consistently government-wide. Work to embed accessibility into policies and practices is only just beginning.

For more information on many of the accessibility initiatives mentioned, see the appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion: a look ahead to 2023

Employees across the public service have worked together in many ways this year to test new ideas, challenge stigma, remove barriers—both physical and cultural—and to build accessibility-confidence in all areas of work.

This year's update "Moving Forward Together," offers a glimpse into the progress we have made in 2022 to improve accessibility in the public service.

To become accessible by default, we need to keep learning, assessing and innovating. Improving diversity, inclusion and accessibility across the federal public service will require concerted effort in the years ahead. Barriers remain for public servants with disabilities. Attention is required in areas such as:

- making tools like the Accessibility Passport available to more employees
- accelerating and broadening efforts to streamline the current workplace accommodations process
- updating enterprise policies to align with the *Accessible Canada Act*
- progressing forward on the goal of hiring 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025
- reviewing best practices and embedding accessibility into hybrid work models across the public service

At the end of 2022, federal departments and agencies will be releasing their own accessibility plans and new feedback mechanisms for accessibility, as required by the *Accessible Canada Regulations*.

The implementation of the Accessibility Strategy has led to improvements in 2022, and more work remains in 2023. The *Accessible Canada Act* and the regulations will help us progress toward achieving our goal of being the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world.

Public servants, stakeholders and all Canadians can help identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Read accessibility plans, provide feedback, and participate in consultations. Achieving our goal of becoming a barrier-free Canada by 2040 will require a continuous cycle of feedback, accountability and measurable action.

Appendix: public service accessibility accomplishments in 2022

► In this section

The appendix provides examples of accessibility-related initiatives across the public service in 2022. For more examples, see the annex in the [2021 progress update](#).

1. Improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities

- a. The [Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities](#), led by the Public Service Commission, onboarded a third cohort of participants for their two-year internship. Cohort 2 continued the second year of their internship (2021–2023). The commission also started recruiting for the final cohort of the program (2023–2025).
- b. The [Employment Opportunity for Students with Disabilities \(EOSD\)](#) (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) helped match 573 students with disabilities with student jobs in the federal public service in 2021–22. Over the summer, 110 students registered to participate in EOSD summer activities, including onboarding and training activities, a new mentorship program, and networking events for students with disabilities.
- c. The [Virtual Door to Talent With Disabilities](#) offers continuous intake of students with disabilities who participated in the [EOSD](#). More than 50 graduates have been added to this inventory and are ready for bridging into positions.
- d. Focused inventories launched in 2021 helped recruit persons with disabilities into the public service in 2022. For example:
 - [Policy and Data Analysis \(EC-01 to EC-05 positions\)](#): ran from March 31, 2021, to March 31, 2022. As of September 2022, 279 candidates had been added to the pool of partially assessed candidates, and 23 candidates had been hired.
 - [Digital and Computer Sciences \(IT-01 to IT-04 positions\)](#): ran from March 31, 2021, to March 31, 2022. As of September 2022, 12 candidates had been added to the list of partially assessed candidates and 3 candidates had been hired.

- Senior Financial Analyst (FI-03 positions): ran from October 29, 2021, to November 24, 2021. As of September 2022, 10 candidates had been added to the pool of fully assessed candidates.
 - Post-Secondary Recruitment (PM-01 positions): The 2021 campaign yielded 200 qualified candidates with disabilities ready for hire.
- e. The Mentorship Plus program has been implemented by 50 organizations across the public service in 2022. The program supports members of equity-seeking groups, including persons with disabilities, who aspire to leadership and executive positions in the federal public service.
- f. The Mosaic Leadership Development Program is an enterprise-wide initiative launched in December 2021 to support leadership development and career progression for equity-seeking employees at the EX minus 1 level. The inaugural cohort consists of 38 participants, 20% of whom identify as having a disability.
- g. More than 20 federal organizations adopted the Government of Canada's Workplace Accessibility Passport. This tool lets employees document barriers in the workplace and the solutions to those barriers. In turn, it streamlines the workplace accommodation process and improves the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of persons with disabilities. The passport is now available for download as a Word document from Canada.ca.
- h. The Assessment Accessibility Ambassadors Network (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) continued to expand its best practices and training to support the Government of Canada's human resources community to improve the accessibility of appointment processes. In 2021-22, 33 ambassadors from 24 departments and agencies met regularly to discuss cases, issues and best practices.
- i. Statistics Canada is piloting a data hub to track progress in real-time toward the Government of Canada's commitment to hire 5,000 new employees with disabilities by 2025. The data hub brings together data from different partner departments and agencies using common indicators and allows users to determine where they need to focus to meet their target.

2. Enhance the accessibility of the built environment

- a. Technical accessibility assessments were completed for 91 Crown-owned portfolio buildings against the CSA Group B651-18 standard. The next phase of technical accessibility assessments will continue over the next two fiscal years.
- b. A pilot project to test a new lighting solution in public service offices was completed. The solution reduced the incidence of visual symptoms for employees with light sensitivities and provided better lighting for all employees. Next steps are being planned and will include testing the new lighting in a setting with more people over longer periods of time.
- c. Pilot projects are underway, and research continues to identify accessibility measures and adaptations that exceed minimum building codes and standards. They include:
 - a two-year pilot project that gives persons with disabilities alternatives for reading signage and navigating indoor spaces. This technology is being monitored and tested until 2023.
 - a contactless elevator pilot project to improve accessibility in the built environment by reducing the touchpoints in elevators. The pilot enables users to access elevator buttons and open automatic doors using their smartphone.
- d. More departments, including the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Department of Finance Canada; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, are developing centralized, streamlined and neutral case management models in the areas of disability.
- e. The GCworkplace Design Resource Centre, which serves as a one-stop shop for departments and agencies to access GCworkplace design tools, was updated to include more accessibility best practices and information to reflect feedback from the GCworkplace Consultation Series on Accessibility in 2021.
- f. Implementation of the Parliamentary Precinct Universal Accessibility (UA) Strategy and Action Plan has begun. This includes applying best practices,

establishing progress monitoring tools, and launching a UA audit program. This work is continuing with an external UA Advisory Committee with persons with disabilities.

3. Make information and communications technology usable by all

- a. New *Guidelines on Making Communications Products and Activities Accessible* were released to departments and agencies in fall 2022.
- b. A "What We Heard" report (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) was released in March 2022. The report summarizes feedback collected during the consultations with federal government organizations in 2021–22 on the draft information and communications technology (ICT) accessibility standard and an ICT scorecard. The scorecard will help ensure that best practices for ICT accessibility are put in place government-wide.
- c. The Lending Library Service Pilot Project at Shared Services Canada is a fast-tracked accommodations process that provides hardware, software and other resources to federal public service employees. The project now serves employees with a variety of short-term needs. In 2021–22, the Lending Library loaned 452 tools. In total, it has supported 256 clients in 49 departments, loaning a total of 809 tools.
- d. The Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program at Shared Services Canada offers a wide range of adaptations, alternate approaches, tools, training, services, resources, and adaptive computer technologies for all federal public service employees with disabilities or injuries. In 2021–22, the program responded to over 14,000 requests for information about accessibility, accommodation and support for individuals with disabilities.
- e. The Management Accountability Framework, a tool used by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to monitor the management performance of federal departments and agencies, was updated to generate baseline data on accessibility assessments of existing online services at the departmental level. The section of the template for the Departmental Plan for Service and Digital

that deals with the accessibility of ICT has also been updated to align with departmental accessibility plans.

- f. The Translation Bureau provided approximately 12,000 hours of sign language interpretation to Government of Canada employees in 2022, allowing them to engage in meaningful work and better serve government and Canadians.
- g. The Translation Bureau led a pilot project on translation in American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) from 2020 to 2022. In 2023, the Bureau will be developing and launching a new sign language interpretation service line for departments and agencies based on the outcomes of the pilot project.
- h. Shared Services Canada provided advice on ICT procurement to technical and contracting authorities government-wide. In 2021–22, SSC provided advice on 115 procurements and sole source contracts at SSC and in 22 other government departments.

4. Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services

- a. Best practices and guidance are being developed to help departments and agencies incorporate accessibility into policy application and into the design and delivery of programs. For example:
 - the guide “A Way With Words and Images” is being updated in consultation with disability experts and persons with disabilities. The guide aims to support an accurate portrayal of persons with disabilities and to foster an accessibility-confident public service
 - developing a disability-inclusion lens to Cabinet proposals to make sure the experiences and needs of persons with disabilities are embedded into federal decision-making processes
- b. The Accessible Procurement Resource Centre at Public Services and Procurement Canada provided support to the procurement community to increase understanding about accessibility and to integrate accessibility into

procurement. Key activities in 2022 included piloting a new learning module on accessibility in procurement, launching an interdepartmental community of practice and releasing a questionnaire for industry to gather information on the needs of businesses owned and led by persons with disabilities.

- c. Statistics Canada released new data on accessibility and persons with disability this year, including the following, which are also available through the agency's [Accessibility Statistics page](#).
 - an infographic, "[Workers with disabilities receiving payments from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program, 2020](#)"
 - an article, "[Age of Disability: From Onset to Limitation](#)," which examines the age of onset for different types of disabilities
 - the national [Canadian Survey on Disability](#), which collects information about the experiences of youth and adults whose everyday activities may be limited because of a long-term health condition
- d. The Public Service Commission released datasets and a new data visualization tool for the [2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey](#), available on the [Open Government portal](#).
- e. Both ASL and LSQ interpretation were offered at various high-visibility events in 2022, such as the federal leaders' debates (watched in ASL and LSQ by over 35,000 people in Canada), the visit of Pope Francis, and every national press conference about critical information (for example, COVID-19, the convoy demonstrations and the war in Ukraine).
- f. In June 2022, Employment and Social Development Canada published [*A Federal Data and Measurement Strategy for Accessibility: 2022 to 2027*](#) to support progress on the implementation of the [*Accessible Canada Act*](#).
- g. Major service arms of the Government of Canada, such as the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Service Canada continue to make their services more accessible. For example, CRA is expanding its use of QR codes and is offering more ways to gather feedback on accessibility. It is also assessing the accessibility of CRA buildings.

5. Build an accessibility confident public service

- a. The Canada School of Public Service launched a new learning platform in February 2022. The new platform is more accessible and has improved the learning and registration experience for all public service learners.
- b. New online learning products to support an accessibility-confident public service have also been launched since last year's report:
 - Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility
 - Disability Management and Workplace Wellness
 - Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce
 - Guide on Biases and Barriers in Assessments (accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
 - Inclusive by Design: Applying the GC Digital Standards and Gender-Based Analysis Plus
 - Making Documents Accessible video
- c. Mandatory training on Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce was introduced for sub-delegated managers, human resources professionals, and other individuals involved in the hiring process.
- d. The Federal Speakers' Forum on Diversity and Inclusion continues to provide a platform for public servants to share their experience with diversity, inclusion and accessibility. The intent is to build empathy and inspire everyone to take action in support of a more diverse and inclusive public service. As of 2022, more than 30% of the people on the roster speak about on accessibility-related topics.
- e. A number of government-wide events and panels in support of an accessibility-confident culture were hosted in 2022 on accessibility and inclusion. These events included:
 - Government of Canada Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2022
 - National AccessAbility Week 2022: Moving Forward Together
 - Policy Community Conference 2022: Policy and Inclusion from Vision to Implementation
 - LEARNX 2022: Optimizing Learning in a Digital and Accessible Environment

- National Disability Employment Awareness Month: Benefits of Hiring Neurodiverse Employees
 - Advancing Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities Series
 - Putting Accessibility Considerations First in Post-Pandemic Workplace Planning
 - Workplace Accommodation Consultation Series for managers
 - Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Peoples Through the Consultation and Accommodation Process
 - Co-Designing Accessibility Plans with People with Disabilities
 - Bootcamps for Accessibility Plans (accessible only on the Government of Canada network)
- f. The inaugural Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion, held in May 2022, brought together governments, disability community stakeholders, academia and regulated entities. This virtual event included panel discussions, cultural performances, a career fair for persons with disabilities, an innovation showcase, and networking sessions.
- g. New guidance was released online to support federally regulated entities in developing feedback mechanisms and their first accessibility plans, as required under the *Accessible Canada Regulations*.
- h. The Maturity Model on Diversity and Inclusion was launched in August 2022. The model is an optional self-assessment tool designed to help federal organizations understand how advanced they are in five dimensions of diversity and inclusion. The model aligns with the accessibility self-assessment tool, launched last year.
- i. As of fall 2022, 17 departments and agencies have used the voluntary organizational accessibility self-assessment tool (accessible only on the Government of Canada network). The tool helps organizations learn about accessibility to help them identify and remove barriers. It also points them to guidance and best practices.
- j. The Centre for Diversity and Inclusion led consultations with diverse stakeholders and submitted a written report to the Employment Equity Act

Review Task Force. The submission reflects findings from data and consultations with employees and employee networks, including employees with disabilities, across the federal public service. It addresses themes such as the definition of disability, barriers in the workplace, and challenges relating to data and accessibility.

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