



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Accessibility Plan

2022-2025

Inclusive by Design and Accessible by Default

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Agri-Food Canada

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Canada

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Accessibility Plan

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Electronic version available at [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Interim Accessibility Plan - agriculture.canada.ca](https://agriculture.canada.ca)

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To request a copy of this plan in an alternative format, please send an email to aafc.accessibility-accessibilite.aac@agr.gc.ca

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Table of Contents

Message from the Deputy Minister

Message from the Persons with Disabilities Network

Executive Summary

The Accessible Canada Act

Building on Our Strengths

Development of the Accessibility Plan: Consultative Process

Barriers to Accessibility – What We Heard

Our Expected Results and Priority Areas

- Culture Change, Education and Awareness
- Employment
- The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services
- The Built Environment
- Information and Communication Technologies
- The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Our 2022–2025 Commitments by Priority Areas

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

Departmental Feedback Process

General Information

Glossary

Message from the Deputy Minister

I am proud to introduce our first accessibility plan based on the [Accessible Canada Act](#), which came into force in 2019. This is an interim 3-year accessibility plan pending the publication of the final Accessible Canada Regulations in the Canada Gazette and the issuance of accessibility plan guidelines for federal organizations.

This plan presents our expected results, priority areas and the steps we will take in collaboration with persons with disabilities to proactively identify, remove, and prevent barriers in the workplace and also in our policies, programs and services. I take great pride in the work we do at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and how we work together to deliver on our mandate. Collectively, we must work together to create a respectful and inclusive workplace culture at all levels where everyone is empowered and supported to achieve their full potential.

In the past year, the senior management team and I met with the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Networks, including the Persons with Disabilities Network, to discuss issues of systemic harassment, discrimination and barriers to equity and inclusion. It is clear that many employees have experienced both interpersonal and systemic discrimination. The effects of this discrimination are very real. They can limit employees' contributions to the Department, affect their career and cause significant personal pain. We heard that our recruitment, career progression and retention practices can sometimes serve as barriers to increasing representation and creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace. We also heard how the lack of centralized support for accessibility and accommodation issues has impacted employees, suggesting that there is more to do in this area and that there is a need to reduce systemic barriers so employees with disabilities can achieve their full potential.

As outlined in this plan, the senior management team and I are committed to:

- Educating and providing accessibility learning and development opportunities and mandatory training (where applicable) to employees at all levels and across all areas of expertise, in order to build an equitable workplace culture where everyone is empowered and supported to achieve their full potential;
- Increasing the representation of persons with disabilities by supporting the Public Service Commission's commitment under the [Accessibility Strategy](#) to hire 5,000 new persons with disabilities by 2025, by hiring 355 employees at AAFC, including through [targeted hiring initiatives and the use of public-service-wide inventories](#);
- Establishing a centralized fund for all accommodation requests and strengthening governance for disability management and workplace wellness programs, with a view to providing seamless, timely and integrated accommodation solutions with standardized and simplified processes;
- Transforming the accessibility project office into a "centre of excellence" that will serve as a hub for all accessibility related activities and provide leadership and cohesion to departmental efforts to achieve accessibility objectives;



Chris Forbes
Deputy Minister

- Building our capacity and capability, as we become more digital, to consider accessibility from the start so that information and communications technology products, services and digital content are usable by all, regardless of ability or disability; and
- Reviewing our policies, programs and service models to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

I invite you all to join me in our continuous efforts to make AAFC an inclusive, diverse and accessible workplace where our colleagues with disabilities have an equal opportunity to succeed and contribute to the growth and development of a diverse, competitive, innovative and sustainable agriculture and agri-food sector.

Message from the Persons with Disabilities Network

Disability comes in many different forms; it does not discriminate against color, age, race or creed. There are currently more than 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world and that number is projected to increase with an aging population and the prevalence of chronic diseases. Limitations from disability are not always physical, but include sensory, cognitive, and mental health related impairments that can be recurrent, fluctuating, continuous or progressive.



Pamela Warburton (left) and Katherine Whybourne (right)
Co-Chairs of the Persons with Disabilities Network

In Canada, the occurrence of disability is more common than one may realize. In fact, according to the [Canadian Survey on Disability](#) conducted by Statistics Canada in 2017, over 1 in 5 (22%), or roughly **6.2 million**, Canadians have at least one disability. Often overlooked are hidden or non-visible disabilities, which encompass over 70% of disabilities.

Persons with disabilities, despite being a large and educated community, are significantly underrepresented in the Canadian workforce. They face a 20% to 60% greater chance of being unemployed, with unemployment rates increasing when the disability is more severe and/or continuous.

For those fortunate enough to obtain employment, employment barriers (physical, administrative, institutional, technological, and attitudinal) result in significantly lower promotion and retention rates, including employment within the federal government.

However, there are many benefits to accessibility and disability inclusion. For example, it is estimated that increases in output and productivity associated with a higher level of labour-force participation and associated earnings of persons with disabilities could raise Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 3.2%.

Accessibility is a human right. It is about removing barriers and creating environments that everyone can access. That means spaces that meet the needs of everyone; inclusive technologies

like screen readers and closed captioning; hiring practices that focus on understanding a person's ability and that give everyone an opportunity to participate and contribute; inclusive documents and content; and creating inclusive and flexible policies, programs and services.

We are thrilled to have our first accessibility plan, which is based on the seven key areas that have been prioritized by the [Accessible Canada Act](#) for improvement. We are also encouraged by the establishment of a centre of excellence to coordinate improvements for accessibility.

If you are a person with a disability, whether it is visible or non-visible, you do not have to walk alone. We invite you to join us in the journey of transforming our workplace culture, policies and programs towards an accessibility-first mindset. We can be reached at the following email address with any inquiries you may have: aafc.pwdn-rph.aac@canada.ca. You may also use the feedback process described in this plan to provide the Department with your feedback on any barriers you experienced dealing with our organization or on the implementation of this plan.

The future is accessible!

Executive Summary

While we await the publication of the final Accessible Canada Regulations and the issuance of accessibility plan guidelines, AAFC has developed this 3 year interim accessibility plan. This accessibility plan provides a foundation for building an accessible and inclusive workplace at all levels within AAFC and for advancing our efforts towards greater representation in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Did you know?

8.7% of AAFC employees indicated that they are a person with a disability, of which 37.8% said that they have a mental health related disability.

– PSES 2020 results

The vision for this plan is to be inclusive by design and accessible by default: a fully inclusive workplace is a productive one, where everyone can contribute fully and where diverse perspectives are brought into decision-making. Accessibility is a shared responsibility between managers and employees. This plan includes four outcomes, six key priority areas based on the Accessible Canada Act, and high-level commitments that will guide our work on disability inclusion and shift us away from a fragmented approach towards consistently applying an accessibility lens to everything we do.

This plan is centered on achieving four outcomes. We will know we are achieving our vision when:

- Persons with disabilities are employed across occupational groups, engaged and provided with timely support and career progression opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential;

- Persons with disabilities, including employees and stakeholders, have equitable access to the built environment, programs and services, information and communications technologies, and accessible and plain-language content;
- Employees at all levels are aware of the goals of the Accessible Canada Act: to achieve full and equal participation of all persons in society, especially persons with disabilities, and to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility; and
- Policies, programs and services are accessible and promote diversity and inclusion in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

This plan is designed to work towards the Accessible Canada Act’s goal of eliminating and preventing barriers that hinder the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities and to address the challenges identified during the departmental consultative process. Our six priority areas, which are based on the seven areas identified by the Accessible Canada Act, are:

- Culture Change, Education and Awareness;
- Employment;
- The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services;
- The Built Environment;
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); and
- The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities.

The priority areas “Communication, other than ICT” and “Transportation”, as identified in the Act, differ from AAFC’s because commitments and activities related to these areas are reflected under our organization’s unique “Culture Change, Education and Awareness” priority area.

As a strategic plan is only as good as its implementation and delivery, we will prioritize the commitments and develop an implementation and delivery plan with clear timelines and accountabilities for each of the six priority areas.

To ensure that accessibility plans are not just documents that sit on a shelf, the Accessible Canada Act dictates that regulated entities, such as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, prepare and publish annual progress reports on the implementation of their accessibility plans. Indicators will be developed to support monitoring and reporting on this plan.

The Accessible Canada Act

The [Accessible Canada Act](#), which came into force in 2019, aims for the full and equal participation of all persons, especially persons with disabilities, in our society. It is a significant and broad piece of legislation that requires the proactive identification and removal of barriers, as well as the prevention of new ones, in the following seven priority areas:

- employment;
- the built environment;
- information and communication technologies (ICT);

- communication, other than ICT;
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- the design and delivery of programs and services; and
- transportation.

The Act is under the leadership of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development & Disability Inclusion.

Recognizing that people are not disabled by their conditions, but instead by environments that are not accessible, not enabling and not welcoming, the Act brought into force the following comprehensive definitions of disability and barrier:

- **disability** means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.
- **barrier** means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

The Act requires that regulated entities prepare and publish accessibility plans every 3 years, in consultation with persons with disabilities, which describe how entities will identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility based on the priority areas of the Act. The Act also requires that entities establish a process to obtain feedback on their plans, and prepare annual progress reports describing the implementation of their plans.

The government will be appointing two new officials who will have enforcement roles under the planning and reporting requirements of the Act and its associated regulations, which will be published in the Canada Gazette part II. These officials will be an Accessibility Commissioner, located within the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and an Accessibility Officer.

The Accessible Canada Act created [Accessibility Standards Canada](#) with the main purpose of developing and revising accessibility standards. Four standards are currently being developed for completion between 2022 and 2023 in the priority areas of employment, plain language, emergency egress (exit) and outdoor spaces.

Did you know?

79% of AAFC employees said that they think their department or agency respects individual differences (for example, culture, work styles, ideas, abilities), whereas 77% of the Public Service said the same.

– PSES 2020 results

To facilitate the implementation of the Act, the government created the [Office of the Public Service Accessibility \(OPSA\)](#) within the Treasury Board Secretariat. OPSA developed [Nothing without us: An accessibility strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) as a roadmap to prepare the public service in the development of their own plans to identify and eliminate barriers.

Building on Our Strengths

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has a tradition of being an employer of choice within the federal public service and, notably, an employer that supports a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone has an opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to organizational priorities.

The Department has a vibrant network of persons with disabilities, along with a Gender and Sexual Diversity Inclusiveness Network, Indigenous Network Circle, Visible Minorities Network, and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network. The Networks are dedicated to ensuring that AAFC continues to grow as an inclusive, respectful and diverse workplace. They are composed of employee volunteers and are supported by Assistant Deputy Ministers and Executive Champions.

The Department also has a Diversity and Inclusion Network Secretariat, which holds monthly meetings with co-chairs of the networks and other stakeholders, including the managers' community and wellness and disability management teams. As disability does not discriminate, these meetings allow for horizontal discussions on systemic inequities and provide a forum to apply an intersectional lens to those issues.

As there can be no effective and lasting cultural change without dedicated senior leadership, the Department's leadership team has engaged with all the networks, including the Persons with Disabilities Network (PwDN), and created a table with a variety of voices for focused horizontal discussions on barriers to diversity and inclusion.

This year, the Department re-launched the Idea Farm with a specific focus on the future of work post-pandemic, removing barriers to accessibility and the greening of AAFC. Idea Farm is a grass-roots initiative that empowers employees by supporting and funding their ideas to implement new approaches, tools and technologies that will improve the workplace and how the Department does business.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for persons with disabilities, but it has also supported accommodations and inclusion, allowing for hybrid work arrangements and opportunities for employees to balance their lives at work and at home. As we transition from an emergency response to a future of flexible, dispersed working, we will continue to engage all stakeholders in creating a barrier-free workplace.

Development of the Accessibility Plan – Consultative Process

This plan was developed and will be implemented in accordance with the principle “**Nothing About Us, Without Us**”, which was brought forward by persons with disabilities and became the theme for the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). This principle affirms that persons with disabilities have a voice that should and must be at the table from the beginning of any planning process and should never be an after-thought.

We began our consultations with the co-chairs of the PwDN in November 2020 to acknowledge concerns and to identify the most relevant priority areas for the plan. With the input we collected, an evergreen action plan was developed for broader initial consultation, which took place with persons with disabilities, other diversity and inclusion networks, branches, regions and governance and management committees within the Department.

We conducted bottom-up and top-down consultations, encouraging employees with disabilities, employees at all levels and senior management tables to engage candidly with each other about accessibility within our organization. During the consultations, we raised departmental awareness on the Accessible Canada Act, identifying concerns, barriers, and potential solutions before finalizing the priority areas for the Department.

Did you know?

The most commonly required types of workplace accommodations were flexible work arrangements (27%), workstation modifications (15%), and human or technical supports (6%).

– 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability

The consultations led to the development of two-pagers with context, key considerations and questions for each of the six priority areas. These documents facilitated the engagement of persons with disabilities and stakeholders across the Department in the identification of initiatives for the plan. A total of eight engagement sessions were conducted, and virtual meetings were held with persons with disabilities, the Director Generals Committee on Accessibility and the Departmental Management Committee to obtain feedback on the draft commitments.

Lastly, we engaged with members of the PwDN and conducted broad departmental consultations to collect feedback on the draft plan prior to the final review and approval by AAFC governance committees.

Barriers to Accessibility – What We Heard

This interim accessibility plan reflects the input, views and ideas of persons with disabilities across the Department. This section summarizes what we heard during our initial consultations and stakeholder engagement process. The following feedback was complemented by survey results, studies and other research analysis in order to develop, strengthen and refine the plan:

- Lack of awareness, support and accountability for ongoing issues of systemic harassment and discrimination, especially for individuals with existing, new or evolving disabilities and for those requiring accommodations or support when returning to the workplace;
- Lack of centralized support and funds for accommodations (as in, “one-stop shop”);
- Lack of training and guidance for employees at all levels on accessibility, accommodations, inclusion and barriers faced by persons with disabilities;
- Lack of confidence amongst managers and supervisors to make swift accommodation decisions for employees without “proof” of their needs;
- Delays in accommodations, particularly the procurement of assistive items, hardware and software, significantly impact persons with disabilities at each stage of the employee lifecycle (as in, recruitment, onboarding, development, retention and separation);
- Lack of career development opportunities specific to persons with disabilities;
- The “one size fits all” design of work spaces creates poor working conditions for persons with disabilities by disregarding the individual needs of the employee;
- Delays in the procurement of assistive items, hardware and software are a major challenge for both the employee and the manager;
- A burden is placed on the employee and the manager to “prove” that an accommodation is necessary;
- Employees oftentimes receive accommodations that do not align with what they asked for when they formally request an accommodation;
- Managers are apprehensive that they will misuse public funds by accommodating wishes instead of needs; and
- Accessibility training should be required amongst managers and supervisors. However, the training should also be extended to the employees who provide support and advice to them (for example, advisors).

Our Expected Results and Priorities

At AAFC, our Accessibility Plan will ensure that:

- Persons with disabilities are employed across occupational groups, engaged and provided with timely support and career progression opportunities, enabling them to reach their full potential;
- Persons with disabilities, including employees and stakeholders, have equitable access to the built environment, programs and services, information and communications technologies, and accessible and plain-language content;
- Employees at all levels are aware of the goals of the Accessible Canada Act: to achieve full and equal participation of all persons in society, especially persons with disabilities, and to proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility; and
- Policies, programs and services are accessible and promote diversity and inclusion in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Based on the priority areas of the Accessible Canada Act, we have identified the following priorities and commitments to work towards the achievement of our expected results. They represent our collective strategy to create a culture of accessibility and strengthen diversity and inclusion within our Department and the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Priority Area: Culture Change, Education and Awareness

We will strengthen disability inclusion and build accessibility awareness and confidence throughout the Department to ensure that we are an attractive workplace for persons with disabilities and that bias, ableism, and negative stigmas against persons with disabilities are addressed at all levels. We will also strengthen corporate governance, leadership and accountability with a view to centralize funding and support for persons with disabilities and increase their participation in decision making. Accessible and inclusive internal and external communications will also be a priority.

Priority Area: Employment

We will work with the Public Service Commission and other stakeholders to implement government-wide initiatives and increase representation across occupational groups and levels. We will also improve conditions for success, such as swifter accommodations and effective onboarding, retention and career development for persons with disabilities.

Priority Area: The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

We will progress efforts towards enhancing representation in the agriculture and agri-food sector and equip ourselves to co-design and deliver accessible and inclusive policies, programs, and services in a multi-channel fashion, both internally and externally. Feedback, continuous learning and improvement will be central elements of our approach.

Priority Area: The Built Environment

We will work with persons with disabilities to proactively enhance the accessibility of the built environment with an “inclusive by design” and “accessible by default” mindset. This work will take into consideration the future of hybrid working (for example, some days worked in office and some days worked remotely) following the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on persons with disabilities and their workspaces.

Priority Area: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

As we become more digital, we will build our capacity and capability to consider accessibility from the start so that information and communications technology products, services and digital content are usable by all, regardless of ability or disability.

Priority Area: Communication, other than ICT

Commitments related to this priority area under the Act are covered under AAFC’s Culture Change, Education and Awareness priority area.

Priority Area: The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

We will implement and leverage procurement principles, rules, and practices with a view to advancing accessibility objectives, including speeding up approvals of assistive equipment.

Priority Area: Transportation

This priority area under the Act is not applicable to AAFC.

Our 2022–2025 Commitments by Priority Areas

The commitments identified in this plan will be undertaken between now and December 2025. The implementation of these commitments will be supported by evergreen implementation and delivery plans for each priority area, as well as continuous engagement and collaboration with persons with disabilities.

Three elements are central to this plan:

- The development of implementation and delivery plans for each of the six priority areas of this 3-year interim accessibility plan with clear timelines and accountabilities;
- The transformation of the accessibility project office into a “**centre of excellence**” that will serve as a hub for all accessibility-related activities and to provide leadership and cohesion to departmental efforts to achieve accessibility within the Department and the sector. The centre will provide advice and support for the integration of accessibility into business practices, processes, services and programs; and
- The creation of a hybrid advisory committee consisting of employees with lived experience and external experts.

Commitments by Priority Area: Culture Change, Education and Awareness

- Establish a centralized fund for all accommodation requests and strengthen governance for disability management and workplace wellness programs, with a view to providing seamless, timely and integrated accommodation solutions with standardized and simplified processes;
- Transform the accessibility project office into a “centre of excellence” that will serve as a hub for all accessibility related activities and to provide leadership and cohesion to departmental efforts to achieve accessibility objectives;
- Implement the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport as a communications tool for employees and managers to exchange accommodations-related information and adopt

Of those AAFC employees who indicated that they were a victim of discrimination, 13% experienced discrimination because of a disability, whereas 16% of the Public Service said the same.

– PSES 2020 Results

a “yes by default” approach to accommodations;

- Raise awareness about the goals of the Accessible Canada Act, including the realization of a barrier-free Canada, culture change, standards development, and monitoring and reporting;
- Provide mandatory training to managers, supervisors and human resources professionals at all levels on accessibility, barriers and inclusion, with a view to build an accessibility-confident organization;
- Encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in departmental and interdepartmental working groups and committees, transformation initiatives and project teams;
- Promote accessible and inclusive internal and external communications practices in compliance with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and provide training and support on the creation of accessible content, including documents, web content and the use plain language; and
- Strengthen governance committees on accessibility, diversity and inclusion and establish a hybrid advisory committee of employees with lived experience and external experts in the areas of built environment, information and communications technology, and programs and services delivery.

Commitments by Priority Area: Employment

- Pursue targeted recruitment initiatives across occupational groups and levels with a view to meeting the departmental recruitment target (355 employees), in support of the commitment under the [Accessibility Strategy](#) to hire an additional 5,000 net new persons with disabilities by 2025;
- Provide targeted support to persons with disabilities with respect to career development and leadership;
- Ensure that staffing and assessment tools, approaches and resources are accessible and inclusive, with special attention to increasing awareness of assessment accommodation services and applying plain-language principles to communications at each stage of the appointment process;

[The Public Service Commission’s Audit of Employment Equity Representation in Recruitment](#) found that persons with disabilities experienced the largest drop in representation of any of the employment equity groups, with decreases in representation at the assessment and appointment stages.

- Develop incentives, such as flexible work arrangements and work-sharing opportunities, to support the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities;
- Review the results of the Public Service Commission's [Audit of Employment Equity Representation in Recruitment](#), in conjunction with the results of the 2021 Employment System Review on the identification of systemic barriers, to develop and promote more inclusive hiring practices;
- Measure progress and improve the workplace experience of persons with disabilities by monitoring survey results, feedback received and employee lifecycle; and
- Prioritize and implement relevant government-wide initiatives, such as the self-identification modernization project and the Public Service Commission's Accessible Assessment Ambassador (AAA) program.

Commitments by Priority Area: The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

- Review external, public-oriented policies and programs to identify and address systemic discrimination, such as ableism and racism, as well as barriers to accessibility and disability inclusion within those policies;
- Enhance representation and address systemic barriers faced by underrepresented groups in the agriculture and agri-food sector by developing a departmental framework and action plan with overarching efforts and targeted initiatives that recognize the unique needs of persons with disabilities. We will also perform qualitative and intersectional analysis and identify data needs both within our programs and the value chain;
- Equip ourselves to design and deliver accessible and inclusive programs and services. We will commit to the use of the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tool when considering the specific needs and circumstances of persons with disabilities who may be impacted by our policies, programs and decisions;
- Support Portfolio Partners in strengthening their approach to diversity and inclusion in corporate activities;
- Ensure that proposals for new internal or external programs and services have addressed accessibility in their design;
- Review internal policies, practices and rules with a view to eliminating barriers and supporting disability inclusion, including improving processes for accommodation, transportation and procurement; and
- Generate enthusiasm and interest in Canadian agriculture from under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities, through the targeted promotion and administration of the AgriDiversity program.

Commitments by Priority Area: The Built Environment

- Address the 22 items identified by Public Services and Procurement Canada’s “Lean Forward” initiatives to eliminate obvious barriers in the built environment;
- Engage persons with disabilities on the accessibility of the built environment through surveys and consultations;
- Identify accessibility criteria in line with the [principles of universal design](#), applying these to retrofit projects and new builds; and
- Develop a cost-effective and user-centric strategy to regularly assess the state of accessibility across AAFC facilities.

78% of AAFC employees said that their physical environment is suitable for their job requirements. The Public Service had the same result of 78%.

– PSES 2020 Results

Commitments by Priority Area: Information and Communication Technologies

- Ensure new systems, including internally developed or procured hardware and software, meet modern accessibility standards;
- Augment departmental capacity to assess and test the accessibility of department-wide information technology systems by recruiting employees with a wide range of disabilities;
- Strengthen our accessibility governance and process by providing training and raising awareness to foster an accessibility-first mindset with respect to digital and information-technology solutions;
- Develop continuous learning tools to support digital literacy, flexible and hybrid work arrangements, and collaboration as we become more digital;
- Engage employees with disabilities on the accessibility of information and communications tools and technology through surveys and consultations; and
- Ensure the agility and timeliness of the procurement process for information and communications technology products and services.

86% of AAFC employees said that they have the tools, technology and equipment they need to do their job, whereas 83% of the Public Service said the same.

– PSES 2020 Results

Commitments by Priority Area: The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

- Establish mandatory training for procurement officers to ensure accessibility is considered at the early stages of the procurement process;

- Equip managers and supervisors to confidently purchase assistive items and tools for employees using acquisition cards to ensure timeliness of accommodations;
- Incorporate accessibility into procurement documents and guidance by adhering to [plain-language principles](#) and offering a variety of formats; and
- Develop a data collection strategy to measure effectiveness and compliance against accessibility procurement guidelines.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

To ensure that accessibility plans are not just documents that sit on a shelf, the Accessible Canada Act dictates that regulated entities, such as AAFC, prepare and publish annual progress reports on the implementation of their accessibility plans.

As with accessibility plans, progress reports must be prepared in consultation with persons with disabilities and illustrate the manner in which persons with disabilities were consulted. The progress reports must also present the feedback received by AAFC through our departmental feedback process and describe how that feedback was taken into consideration.

The accessibility plan will serve as a framework to guide our desire to be a leader in accessibility and inclusion. To implement the plan, we will work with persons with disabilities, internal stakeholders and governance committees to prioritize our commitments, confirm leads and update our evergreen implementation and delivery plans to reflect lessons learned, continuous research and emerging best practices.

As the commitments are prioritized and implemented, we will collaborate with stakeholders, including the Office of the Public Service Accessibility and Statistics Canada, in their efforts to develop performance measures to monitor results and improvements. To further assess progress, AAFC is also developing a diversity and inclusion index based on PSES indicators and workforce data. The index and continuous feedback from persons with disability will inform our evergreen implementation and delivery plans.

Departmental Feedback Process

As dictated by the Accessible Canada Act, we will establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback regarding the implementation of the accessibility plan and barriers experienced by our employees and people who deal with our organization.

Below, you will find a description of our feedback process, which will facilitate the provision of anonymous feedback both internally and externally:

- Publish the Accessibility Plan and Progress Report on AgriSource, Knowledge Workspace and AAFC's Canada.ca website and have an anonymous survey available to clients on the AAFC's Canada.ca website;

- Establish a designated accessibility Info Line, email and mailing address for employees and clients;
- Develop web forms based which will capture employee and client feedback on the implementation of the accessibility plan and barriers to accessibility and inclusion; and
- Build an advisory committee consisting of employees with lived experience and external experts.

The Accessibility project office will facilitate the establishment of the proposed feedback process, respond to any non-anonymous feedback and incorporate feedback into our priorities and commitments and progress report.

General Information

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Glossary

Ableism

- Ableism is a belief system, analogous to racism, sexism, or ageism, that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, and of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society.

Accessibility

- Accessibility is the combination of aspects that influence a person's ability to function within an environment.

Accessible

- Accessible refers to a place that is easily reached, an environment that is easily navigated or a program or service that can easily be obtained.

Accommodation

- Accommodation is the personalized adaptation of a workplace to overcome the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. For example, an accommodation could be providing an employee with an assistive item, such as an ergonomic keyboard or mouse, or adjusting an employee's weekly targets to align with their abilities.

Barrier

- Barrier means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Disability

- Disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.
 - **Seeing** disabilities affect vision, including total blindness, partial sight and visual distortion.
 - **Hearing** disabilities affect ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness or acoustic distortion.

- **Mobility** issues affect ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting your mobility. Issues with flexibility or dexterity affects ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands.
- **Mental health** issues affect psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social/compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness.
- **Sensory/environmental** disabilities affect sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities.
- **Cognitive** disabilities affect ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication and memory, including autism or Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities.
- **Intellectual** disabilities affect your ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations.
- **Chronic health conditions or pain** affect ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions.

Discrimination

- Discrimination means treating someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction, which, whether intentional or not, has an effect that imposes disadvantages not imposed on others or that withholds or limits access that is given to others.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is the act of recognizing, valuing and building on differences in identity, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences and perspectives while respecting human rights.

Nothing Without Us

- Nothing Without Us is a guiding principle used across the Government of Canada to communicate the message that no policy should be decided by a representative without the full and direct participation of the members of the group affected by that policy.

Systemic barrier

- A systemic barrier is a pattern of behaviour inherent in the policies and practices of an organization, which creates or perpetuates disadvantage for persons with disabilities.