Canada Border Services Agency Accessibility Plan

2023 to 2025

Accessibility Office

The [Accessibility Plan](#) is available on the Canada Border Services Agency website.

Aussi offert en français sous le titre : Plan sur l'accessibilité de l'Agence des services frontaliers du Canada (2023 à 2025)

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Message from the President, Executive Vice President and Champion

The *Accessible Canada Act*: Making progress for disability rights

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) is a big step forward for the rights of people with disabilities in Canada. This law was created to build a public service that can adapt and respond to the needs of the disability community. It is also meant to address new barriers that come up as our economy, culture and technology change.

"Nothing Without Us" in action

Putting the [federal "Nothing Without Us" strategy](#) into action means we are committed to make sure that people with disabilities are involved in creating and carrying out all programs and rules that affect them. We are proud of the work we have already done to make sure everyone has fair and equal access to our programs and services. We also look forward to continuing to engage with people who care about what we do, to make sure that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is barrier free.

Starting with our employees

To make CBSA barrier-free, it starts with our employees. Over the next few years, we will keep working on getting a diverse group of people to join us and stay with us long term. We want our agency to look like the Canadian population, with people from all different backgrounds. Having a representative workforce will cause positive effects on the agency's ability to deliver high quality and effective programs and services. To achieve this, we are reinforcing our dedication to inclusivity by investing in the transformation of our organizational culture. In 2018, we launched a Culture transformation strategy focused on achieving a healthy workplace culture. Ultimately, we would like to reach our goal of being One Team founded on trust.

Learning from the pandemic

During the pandemic, we saw how important trust is in creating a workplace where people feel safe and valued, and that we care for each other. This shared sense of purpose helped us continue doing important work for Canadians during a very tough time in history. We want to keep building on these lessons and make sure our agency is inclusive and free of barriers.

Our accessibility plan

We are happy to share our first plan for accessibility. This plan is like a roadmap that shows how we will support the priorities of the act and the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations*. These laws give us a clear starting point for what we need to do as a service provider and as an employer.

With this plan, we want everyone to know that making things accessible is something we all have to do. Our employees, travellers and clients can count on us to be proactive and methodical in our approach to breaking down barriers and changing the systems that have kept them in place.

Our commitment

We are committed to creating a better future by including the knowledge and experiences of people with disabilities in everything we do. This includes the creation and application of our agency's Accessibility Plan.

Sincerely,

Erin O'Gorman

President

Ted Gallivan

Executive Vice-President

Annie Beauséjour

Champion for Persons with Disabilities

General

This section will provide information about our agency, explaining the goal of this document and how we developed our plan. We will also explain how you can provide feedback and/or request alternative formats of this document.

Contact us

Feedback can be provided on the contents of this 2023 to 2025 Accessibility Plan, our Annual Accessibility Progress Reports, accessibility feedback process, or barriers encountered while interacting with the CBSA. We will keep working with the persons with disabilities community, their allies and external disability organizations. We hold consultations to improve our plan each year. Plus, we would love to hear your feedback as it helps us make our action plans better.

Please note that all feedback related to accessibility will be acknowledged in the same way that it is received, and we will provide a full response within 28 business days.

We also accept accessibility feedback in alternate formats (such as print, large print, braille, audio formats, or electronic format).

If you want to provide anonymous feedback
- Do not give your name or any identifying information (for example, your email address or phone number)
- If you mail us feedback, do not include your return address on the envelope

What we do with your feedback
We analyze feedback for trends and patterns. We do not identify individuals in our reports.

Your feedback will only be connected to you if you request a personal response from our Accessibility Office.

We publish annual progress reports in the years between accessibility plans. In these reports, we discuss statistics and themes of the feedback we receive and how we are taking it into consideration.

How to provide feedback

Website: [CBSA accessibility feedback form](#)

Email address: CBSA.Barrier_Free-Sans_Barriere.ASFC@cbsa-asfc.gc.ca

Mail:

Nhung Nguyen, Director Workforce Equity and Inclusion Programs

Accessibility Office

Canada Border Services Agency

191 Laurier West

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0L8

Phone: 1-800-461-9999, select preferred language then press 0

Teletypewriter: 1-866-335-3237

In person: accessibility feedback can be provided directly with an employee at a physical service location.

Social media: send us a private message with your accessibility feedback on this plan, our Annual Accessibility Progress Reports or our feedback process.

- [X (Twitter)](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

Alternate formats

We understand that this format might not be accessible for everyone. You can ask for an alternative format of this Accessibility Plan (2023 to 2025), our Annual Accessibility Progress Reports or our accessibility feedback process. We offer these documents in the following alternative formats:

- print
- large print
- braille
- audio formats
- an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist persons with disabilities

Timeframes to receive alternate formats:

- Braille or an audio format: 45 days after the day that the request is received
- Any other format: within 15 days after the day that the request is received

You can request alternative formats by mail, email, phone, teletypewriter, social media or in person. Ways to make a request for alternative formats can be found under the Contact information and feedback process section above.

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Email address: CBSA.Barrier_Free-Sans_Barriere.ASFC@cbsa-asfc.gc.ca

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- X (Twitter)
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- Instagram
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About our agency

Our mission

We make it easy for legitimate travellers and goods to move safely across our borders. We enforce more than 100 acts and regulations that keep our country and population safe. We have offices and facilities all over Canada and around the world, with over 1,200 service locations.

Our work

Our agency operates in a complex and changing environment. We have to respond to new threats and global trends while always keeping Canada's safety top of mind. We are committed to protecting the people, economy and infrastructure of Canada.

How we achieve our goals

To do our job well, we aim to be proactive, adaptable and innovative. We are always improving how we work, how we use modern technology and how involve our teams.

Accessibility Statement

The Accessible Canada Act: Making progress

The *Accessible Canada Act* is all about giving people with disabilities the chance to be independent, have control over their lives and enjoy equal opportunities. Our agency is committed to being a leader when it comes to accessibility, and this first 3-year plan is proof of that commitment. This plan is a guide towards making all our programs and services more accessible and helpful for everyone in Canada.

Our journey

In 2018, we embarked on transforming our workplace culture which has had a positive impact for employees and persons with disabilities. The Public Service Employee Survey shows that more people say they are being treated with respect, especially those with disabilities. We have seen a 9% increase in positive responses from people with disabilities.

We are proud of the work we have done to date to build a foundation of trust in our organization. **But we know there is more to do** because people with disabilities still face big challenges at work and in society. We are excited to keep working on this and to make sure that accessibility is a part of everything we do.

Including everyone

Our plan included people with disabilities from the very start. We invited members of the disability community both internally and externally to help inform the plan and make sure it was designed from the perspective of people who know what it is like to live with a disability.

The team in charge of creating the plan includes people with disabilities. Those who know what it is like to live with a disability will continue helping with the plan and making sure we break down barriers so that all travellers, clients and employees will be included.

Leading the agency in accessibility

In April 2021, we established an Accessibility Office to lead our efforts in making things more accessible. This office is where we focus on everything related to accessibility.

What our Accessibility Plan covers

CBSA's Accessibility Plan is centred around the same 7 main areas that are included in the *Accessible Canada Act*.

These areas are:

1. Employment
2. The built environment
3. The procurement of goods, services and facilities
4. Communications, other than information communications technologies
5. Information and communication technology
6. The design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

We also have responsibilities as a transportation service provider and need to follow the rules under the *Accessible Transportation for People with Disabilities Regulations*.

Our agency's culture and how we manage change are crucial to ensure our work is successful. We want everyone to think about accessibility in everything they do. It serves as a common thread through all 7 of these priority areas.

Developing our accessibility plan

Our accessibility plan (2023 to 2025): We made our Accessibility Plan for 2023 to 2025 by following the rules of the *Accessible Canada Act* and its regulations. We also observed the Canadian Transportation Agency's requirements within the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations* as well as the *Accessible Transportation for Person's with Disabilities Regulations*.

How we organize our work

Our agency is complex. To account for this, we have different working groups for each priority area of our plan. These groups report to a team of senior leaders in our agency, called the Accessibility Task Force. We also work with the Culture Directorate to think about how the activities of each of our priority areas will affect our agency's culture.

What we have done so far

We have been mostly focused on identifying problems and barriers, holding consultations, making plans to fix the problems and starting accessibility training for our

front-line workers. The training is a requirement of the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*. Our plan is not set in stone. We will keep updating it as we learn more about the challenges people with disabilities face.

Our goals for the next 3 years

The following sections will give you an idea of what we want to do in the next 3 years for each of our 7 priority areas. We will also create and share progress reports every year to evaluate how we are doing towards meeting our goals.

Guiding principles for our action plans

When we created our priority area action plans, we followed some important principles:

Nothing Without Us: Persons with disabilities were part of the research, design and application making our accessibility approach better. This is called: "Inclusive by design, accessible by default."

Collaboration: Employees with disabilities, managers, colleagues and leaders from the CBSA all worked together to find and remove barriers. We also looked at expertise from inside and outside our organization when and where we needed it.

Sustainability: We focused on actions to make accessibility a part of our plans from the start. These actions can be put into practice, measured and have a real impact.

Transparency: This means being open and clear about roles and responsibilities. It is also about using clear language. Both are really important for making progress in our action plans.

Evidence: We used good sources and data to find, remove and prevent barriers.

Employment

Our agency in a nutshell

The agency has more than 15,000 employees working all over Canada and in other countries. About half our employees work in areas like airports, land borders, railways, ships and post offices. Those working in operational environments facilitate the legitimate movement of travellers and goods. Our frontline workers serve millions of travellers each year. They welcome people to Canada and also do complex work to protect Canadians' health prosperity and safety.

Staff that are not frontline workers are in our corporate and program areas that support our operations. They work on our programs and services, manage human resources, technology, communications and finances. Our workforce is diverse, and that is one of our greatest strengths.

Making our workplace better

We know our employees are our most important asset. To support our employees, we will be making changes so that all employees feel included, receive training that is accessible, have the tools and help they need to succeed and reach their full potential at work. We looked at what we are good at and what we need to do to improve our employees experience in the workplace. We found some gaps and are working to fix them. We understand we might not have found all the gaps and may not be aware of all the challenges that people with disabilities encounter at work, but this is something we will continue to work on.

Creating a diverse workforce

We want our workforce to represent the diversity of our country. Right now, 4.3% of our employees say that they have a disability. However, 9.4% of people working in Canada could have a disability. That means there is a gap of up to 5.1%, which is about 751 people. We are focused on closing our current gaps and are working on recruiting more people and encouraging them to self-identify.

Why people do not self-identify

Self-identification is a voluntary process within the Federal Public Service. Due to our low numbers of Persons with Disabilities, in 2020, we asked our employees why they do not self-identify. We learned that some do not understand why they should, and others worry it might affect their careers. They are also concerned about being judged, treated differently or losing job opportunities. This is especially a concern in law enforcement where there is a physical requirement to do the job.

Making it easier for job candidates

During our consultations we have also learned that job candidates face barriers when applying to government jobs. Removing these obstacles will expand the available talent pool, offering all candidates an equitable chance for success. We want to make changes in how we advertise available positions, so more people have a fair chance.

Training for inclusion and accessibility

To follow Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations, we are making sure all our employees have access to training on inclusion and accessibility. This will remind our front-line workers and decision-makers that all individuals should always be treated with dignity and respect. By providing training to our employees, it will improve how employees think about having a truly accessible workplace and services.

Goals and performance measures

In the next 3 years, the Human Resources Branch, which oversees the Employment priority area, will focus on 3 main goals:

1. **Increase representation:** We want to have more people with disabilities working with us to match the percentage of people working in Canada who have disabilities.
   - We plan to hire 330 people with disabilities by December 2025
   - We are looking at our hiring processes to find and reduce any barriers by 2025
2. **Reducing stigma**: We want our employees and job seekers to trust us and feel safe identifying that they have a disability.
   - We hope to increase self-identification rates from 61% (in 2022) to 80% by 2025
3. **Being inclusive from the start:** We want to give our employees and job seekers the tools, resources and support they need so they can perform to their full potential in an inclusive environment.
   - We are going to train our managers to help identify and remove barriers and support employees with disabilities
   - We want at least 80% of employees to have the equipment and tools they need to do their job to the best of their ability, and contribute to the workplace
   - We aim to receive fewer reports of harassment and discrimination from people with disabilities
   - We want more people with disabilities to feel like they have succeeded in their careers as a result of accessibility or accommodation support

- We want employees with disabilities to feel the same sense of belonging as employees without disabilities
- Our aim is to have the percentage of employees with disabilities who report confidence in their immediate supervisor to be equal to employees without disabilities who report confidence in their immediate supervisor

Barriers

To find barriers, we have been working with people who have disabilities and are reviewing our internal hiring processes with the help of our Internal Audit Program Evaluation Directorate.

Barriers for job seekers and employees can be found in our policies, systems and how we do things.

Job application process

Applying for jobs in the Federal Public Service can be confusing and overwhelming. Job postings often have lots of questions that might not be clear or use government terms. This may remove candidates who do not know how to answer them. Also, the Canada Jobs platform is not easy to use with tools like screen readers. This makes it harder for people with disabilities to apply for jobs.

Official languages requirements

Language requirements can be a problem for wanting to move up in a career, and this can affect some equity groups more than others. The language training, we have available does not meet the needs of people with different disabilities, like learning disabilities, speech difficulties, or vision loss.

Security screening

The security screening part of the job application process can be intimidating, especially in everyone understands how disabilities can affect candidates and job seekers.

Unconscious bias

Unconscious bias means we have attitudes that can be unfair to some groups of people, like people with disabilities without us even knowing it. This can show up at any stage of an employee's time with us and can make them lose trust, affect their confidence, feel like they do not belong or that they lack the abilities to progress in their careers. We are working hard to increase awareness around unconscious bias and have implemented training for all hiring managers. By the end of the 2022 to 2023 fiscal year, 95% of hiring managers will have taken the 2-hour course on it. Starting in September 2022, we have made it mandatory for everyone at the agency to learn about

things like unconscious bias, micro-aggressions and unfair attitudes through our Anti-Racism and Allyship training. These trainings will also benefit people with disabilities.

The accommodation process

The duty to accommodate refers to the obligation of the employer to take steps to eliminate disadvantages to employees and candidates resulting from a rule, practice or physical barrier that has, or may have, an adverse impact on individuals or groups described by the prohibited grounds in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The duty to accommodate process, which is managed by the Accommodation and Disability Management Advisors, is a joint effort, requiring the participation of both the employee and employer, in order to identify the employee's limitations and establish an accommodation where feasible considering, health, safety and cost to the employer.

There is a nuanced distinction between duty to accommodate and accessibility. Accessibility is not case-specific, rather, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that all employees have barrier-free access to information, programs, infrastructure and tools as guided by the principals set out in the Accessible Canada Act. The Accessibility Office at the CBSA is working with partners to help make certain workplace adaptations more accessible, such as the provision of ergonomic equipment or adaptive technologies.

Should an employee disclose a personal circumstance that prevents them from carrying out the full range of their duties, above and beyond what is already established within the parameters of accessibility, they would be required to submit a formal accommodation request.

The duty to accommodate process may seem bureaucratic to employees at times. There are often several layers of approvals and forms required, which can sometimes lead employees to believe that they are being a burden to their organization.

Recently, in consultation with the unions, the duty to accommodate team has updated the Duty to Accommodate Policy and created a guide for employees, which outlines the duty to accommodate process from start to finish. They are currently working on simplifying the forms to avoid unnecessary back and forth and various levels of approval.

The creation of the Accessibility Office at CBSA can further mitigate confusion with the duty to accommodate process by ensuring that the duty to accommodate team is aware of the identified barriers and have the tools and Advisors in place to address them.

As the team responsible for duty to accommodate is nationalized, the management of these requests is already centralized. This team will be responsible for exploring the feasibility of the GC Accessibility Passport at CBSA and making a recommendation on

implementation while taking into consideration the organization's unique operational environment.

Training and development

Our current training and development courses aren't always accessible to employees with diverse learning needs. During the pandemic, we started offering more virtual courses, which helped people with social anxiety because there was less pressure to interact with others. While our agency has it is own language school, it can't fully serve employees with different needs, so we rely on outside resources to help. The Training and Learning Solutions Division and our college already have processes in place to provide accommodations if someone has a learning disability.

Action plan

The Accessibility Office's role

In April 2021, the Human Resources Branch created an Accessibility Office for our agency. This office supports the Director General level Accessibility Taskforce. The Accessibility Taskforce oversees the Accessibility Action Plan and future progress reports.

Improving accessibility services

The Accessibility Office, along with the Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program, made an agreement with Shared Services Canada's Accessibility, Accommodation, and Adaptive Computer Technology program in November 2021. This agreement helps us handle requests for adaptive software and equipment more efficiently, so employees do not have to wait as long.

Listening to employees

The Accessibility Office, along with the Culture team, has talked to many employees across the organization. We will keep doing these consultations as we work on our action plans and progress reports.

Here are the things we will do to in the Employment area from 2023 to 2025:

1. Provide tools and resources to managers and employees
   - 90% of sub-delegated hiring managers have already completed mandatory unconscious bias training
   - We will provide training on "Incorporating the Practices of Anti-Racism and Allyship" to create more understanding around unconscious bias, prejudice, and supporting equity-deserving groups

- We will work on our mapping project from 2023 to 2024 to understand the onboarding experience from the perspective of employees with disabilities
- Design tools and job aids for managers to better support employees with disabilities from 2024 to 2025
- We are planning to develop a sponsorship and mentoring programs for employees with disabilities in 2024 to 2025

2. Hire and onboard employees with disabilities
   - We will set specific hiring goals at the branch and regional levels and have included these goals in our business plans
   - We will create a strategy and action plan to address the representation gap for persons with disabilities within our agency
   - We will continue to share and promote information and resources for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities
   - We will hire an external organization to complete an Employment Systems Review (2022 to 2023) which will identify barriers to hiring persons with disabilities
   - We will launch a campaign in 2022 to 2023 on self-identifying, helping employees understand the process and learn about diverse groups, including those with disabilities

3. Improve the delivery of workplace accommodations
   - Develop an action plan to consult and potentially implement the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport within our agency from 2024 to 2025
   - In 2023 to 2024, we will develop a process to measure and reduce wait times for workplace accommodations that are not considered formal duty to accommodate requests

4. Remove barriers in our staffing processes
   - In 2023 to 2024, we will adjust our staffing rules, Human Resources practices and assessment methods to eliminate barriers to accessibility
   - In 2023 to 2024, we will analyze and compare hiring, promotion and retention rates for employees with disabilities to ensure equity

Culture, change management and engagement

Changing our culture involves changing how we think about accessibility. We want to make sure that people with disabilities are part of planning, developing policies and delivering services. We also want to change how employees and managers think about including people with disabilities in their planning and their work. To make these changes happen and last, we need a good change management plan. The Strategic Change Office and Culture Directorate are important partners in making this happen.

What we have done so far

So far, the Strategic Change Office has done assessments for managing change and created a plan for making things more accessible. That strategy aligns with and complements our agency's culture change management strategy developed earlier by the change office. Consistent with the views of the accessibility change management strategy, early and ongoing engagement is underway. We are committed to being open and building trust by sharing a report on what we have heard during consultations with people with disabilities. This information informs decision-making at the strategic and operational levels.

The built environment

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has many offices and operational areas (like air, land, rail, marine and postal) that we either own or rent through special arrangements.

The Built Environment is focused on establishing a strong foundation of planning, collaboration and developing clear targets in collaboration with the Public Service Procurement of Canada and owner operators. This will help us remove obstacles in our workplaces, which will be good for our employees and the public we serve.

Because of the complexity of our work, we need a long-term plan to make sure we meet and go beyond accessibility standards by 2040. First, we will be looking at our spaces closely to get better information. This will help us understand the problems our employees, travellers and clients face. We will start by doing accessibility audits in our spaces and then we will use what we learn to make more precise plans in the future.

Our plan is to make sure our offices and operational sites are easy to use for everyone. Here is what we will do:

- We will make sure the spaces the public uses, follow the Canadian Standards Association's Group's Accessible Design for the Built Environment (B651-18) as much as possible
- We will start an assessment of the property we own and lease to guide upcoming funding plans
- We will follow the National Accommodations Strategy to make our offices better, following the latest design standards (GCworkplace). These standards include ideas to make federal workplaces barrier-free
- The outcomes of this plan will help us figure out what big projects and changes we need to make in the future which will make it easier for us to help our employees, travellers and clients

Goals and performance measures

We are dedicated to making all our spaces barrier-free by 2040. To make this happen, we have 5 long-term goals:

- **Accessible buildings:** We want our clients, employees and travellers to have barrier-free access to use our buildings, whether we own or lease them
- **Supporting our employees:** We will make sure our employees have what they need to succeed in their workplaces
- **Training for managers:** Our managers will know how to support employees who need changes to their workplace to make them more accessible and inclusive
- **Equal access for everyone:** The travelling public, importers, etc. should have equitable access to our buildings and infrastructure
- **Top-notch buildings:** Our buildings will meet and even surpass the federal accessibility standards

In the next 3 years, we will be focusing on these 3 main goals:

1. Collecting data on accessibility:
   - We will aim for a 28% increase every year in the accessibility audit data for buildings we own
   - We will finish collecting this data between 2025 to 2026
2. Making spaces more accessible:
   - Increase the office space that meets the Government of Canada's workplace standards by 2,000 square meters each year (based on current funding levels)
   - Increase tactile signage by 10% each year
3. Building an inclusive and barrier-free agency:
   - Have 75% of our National Real Property and Accommodations team complete training on accessibility
   - We want our working group to complete an annual review of processes within the built environment for our spaces across Canada

Barriers

The way our buildings and spaces are designed is very important to create inclusive spaces for work and providing services. We are working hard to make sure our buildings are accessible, but we know there are still problems that make it tough for employees to do their best work and for people to access our programs and services. We are trying to create inclusive spaces that have as few barriers as possible. Here are some things we are doing to make that happen:

Flexible office spaces and building system

Enclosed and open office spaces can create barriers. For example, open offices have more distractions which can be difficult for some people. In closed offices, people might feel lonely and want to work with others. Some employees have disabilities you cannot see (for example, environmental sensitivities, chronic pain, anxiety, autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder). Different types of work environments can make it harder for them. We want to make our offices more flexible. That means we will have things like noise-cancelling headphones, walls for cubicles and lights that can be dimmed. These changes will make it easier for everyone to work.

Doors and entrances

Some people with disabilities have trouble getting through doors because they do not open automatically or because there are no ramps. Poor signage or wayfinding can also be a problem. Narrow entrances can also be a barrier, which is particularly a challenge in older buildings. We are working on fixing these problems as we redesign buildings and workspaces to meet the Government of Canada's workplace standards for accessibility and inclusivity.

Parking spaces

Parking spaces are a common barrier for both employees and the public. There needs to be enough parking spaces for people with mobility problems. Parking is usually managed by another company, so we do not have complete control over how much parking there is. Making parking spaces accessible is important, and to do that, we need to set clear expectations and work closely with the companies that manage parking.

Fixed surface heights

Fixed surfaces like counters and desks can be a problem for those who use wheelchairs or walking aids. When there are not spaces designed for them, it makes it hard to use services and can also make people feel like they are not being treated fairly. For example, if a kitchen is only made for people who can stand, those with height limitations might need help to reach their food. This can make them feel like they are not independent and affect their sense of dignity.

Action plan

We've put a lot of thought into making our offices and workspaces more accessible. We've also worked closely with those who own and operate our buildings to make sure we meet or even exceed government rules.

The pandemic gave us a chance to reimagine our workplaces so they could be inclusive and support our organization's diverse needs. In the last 2 years, we have worked on

many projects to make our offices more inclusive. We always think about accessibility and inclusion in these projects.

Here are some things we have already done:

- We have added more push buttons to open doors automatically at Place Vanier in Ottawa to go above standards
- We have added push buttons and panic buttons for the accessible washrooms at the Sir Richard Scott building in Ottawa
- We redesigned offices in 4 major locations: Halifax, Calgary, Ottawa and Vancouver, following the Government of Canada's rules

We are making progress in some offices, but we need to keep working to finish the job. This includes doing more accessibility audits and making plans with the people who work with us.

Here are the things we will do to make our spaces barrier-free from 2023 to 2025:

1. Collect accessibility data
   - Include audits on accessibility in our planning and Building Condition Reports for the spaces we own across Canada
   - Figure out which legislated facilities where we are the occupant (for example, airports and other terminals) need changes to be barrier-free
2. Increase accessibility of space
   - Create multi-year investment plans clarifying how much money we need for these projects
   - Every year, make more of our office spaces meet the current office standards (using existing funding)
   - Make plans to get more accessible office space in the National Capital Region in Ottawa
   - Set a goal to increase accessible space in our operational buildings that we own (using existing funding) and collaborate with the Major Projects Office
   - Smaller mandatory declaration messages following the Canadian Standards Association requirements have been installed in CBSA's customs areas
3. Build a barrier-free agency
   - Find ways to go beyond accessibility standards in our owned facilities
   - Look at our policies and processes to see if they are creating any barriers and add plans to fix them in our plan
   - Find opportunities where we can meet accessibility standards even before we switch to the GCworkplace
   - Find ways to update our Real Property Training Standards to include technical training on accessibility

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The procurement of goods, services and facilities

Procuring accessible goods and services is a crucial step in creating a culture and environment that is inclusive by design. Procurement of the goods, tools and services we use every day in our workplace is an investment. We are committed to making sure that our investments help remove barriers for others.

Procurement in the public service is a highly regulated field, led by Public Service Procurement of Canada. This department has shown great leadership in this space by supporting the community of practice through resources and strengthened guidelines on accessibility.

Key players in accessibility procurement

In accessible procurement, there are key roles played by business owners, technical authorities and contract authorities. Business owners are responsible for ensuring accessibility is included at the outset for goods, services and construction. This will ensure that deliverables include accessibility features. Contract authorities validate and ensure that business owners have thought through all contracting considerations for a fair and transparent process, including the inclusion of accessibility factors.

Goals and performance measures

In the next 3 years, we will be focusing on these goals:

Accessibility procurement training: Ensure that all procurement officers and procurement staff take accessible procurement training.

We will be taking a phased approach over 3 years to achieve this:

- Currently, 75% of procurement specialists and delegated managers have completed the required training
- By 2023 to 2024, we aim to reach 85%
- By 2024 to 2025, our target is 90%
- By 2025 to 2026, we aim for 100% trained

Accessible procurement practices: We will ensure our procurement practices are accessible, in line and compliant with standards and guidelines (Treasury Board Directive on Accessible Procurement).

- We are currently reviewing our processes, with proposed changes to be implemented by 2025

Informed business owners: Make sure that business owners are informed and understand their obligations to consider accessibility in their procurement decisions.

- We will use accessibility exemptions only in exceptional circumstances (case by case), and make sure that they are well documented to ensure transparency
- We will include the Treasury Board Secretariat accessibility attestation form in procurement files

Barriers

The barriers in the procurement are mainly associated with attitudes, practices and the tools we use:

Timing and planning
Procurement processes can take a long time to complete and require significant planning, especially if they are high-value items. Time constraints and operational pressures can lead to rushed planning, affecting our ability to support accessibility goals. To address this, we have a robust Integrated Business Planning process. It identifies major procurement activities early, allowing for more inclusive planning.

Market availability
There can be a limited number of suppliers who can deliver accessible goods and services. This can cause delays in getting accessible products, services and construction projects. However, we expect the market to grow as more requests for proposals include accessibility criteria, and accessibility standards become more defined.

Awareness and knowledge
Lack of awareness and knowledge about accessibility considerations in procurement can create barriers for employees and clients since products, services and facilities may not be accessible. To improve awareness, we are introducing both formal and informal training and learning opportunities. We aim to increase awareness and encourage inclusive behaviours, such as integrating the Treasury Board Secretariat's accessibility attestation form.

Action plan

Developing accessibility tools and resources: We are committed to creating tools and resources for managers that include suggested contract clauses focusing on accessibility.

This work will be led by the Finance and Corporate Management Branch from 2023 to 2025 by:

1. **Educating and advising clients:** Starting in 2023, we will launch engagement and outreach activities to educate and advise clients about accessibility requirements
2. **Providing training on accessible procurement:** From 2023 to 2025, we will implement required training for procurement specialists and managers on accessible procurement, including:
   - Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility (Canada School of Public Service, INC115)
   - Disability management and workplace wellness (Canada School of Public Service, INC120)
3. **Ensuring accessible procurement systems:** From 2023 to 2025, we will review procurement systems and tools to ensure they are accessible to all users
4. **Incorporating accessibility provisions:** From 2023 to 2025, we will work on directly adding accessibility provisions to all applicable systems, making accessibility a systematic part of our processes

Communications, other than information communications technologies

The Communications Directorate works with agency business and program leaders to create and manage important content for both internal and external audiences. We use different tools and methods to communicate. This includes our [website](#), and our social media accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and X. We also use an intranet site and a daily email-based newsletter to communicate with our employees. We produce many different visual and audio-visual products like posters, videos, signs and more. We work closely with local and international media and news outlets to share up-to-date information about the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) programs and services.

The Communications Directorate has had the advantage of working with accessibility guidance for many years. Our communication specialists are trained and understand accessibility standards. Our products either meet or exceed Government of Canada standards noted in the *[Policy on Communications and Federal Identity](#)*, *[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)* and Treasury Board's *[Standard on Web Accessibility](#)*.

Web and digital accessibility standards are well defined within the Government of Canada. There are many working groups across government and at all levels preparing documents, policies, tools and resources to help digital communications teams create more accessible web pages, websites and web content.

The Culture Directorate has also launched a Plain Language initiative to improve the agency's culture and to teach employees how to write using understandable language. Using plain language helps us be more empathetic to our audiences' needs, promoting authenticity and inclusivity in our messages and instructions and making them clearer for our partners. Developing and testing content in advance also gives us valuable insights.

Here are some guiding principles we follow in our communications:

- Respect for linguistic duality by providing content in, at a minimum, both official languages
  - Using Indigenous languages, where feasible, is important for inclusion
- Communicate inclusively using plain and neutral language
- Ensure visual products use clear and accessible colours and represent Canada's diversity
- Produce videos with captions and scripts for those with hearing disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, auditory processing disorders and other disabilities

We are proud of the progress we have made to make our communications products accessible to diverse audiences. Our Communications team leads by example and understands the attitudes, behaviours and norms needed for barrier-free communication. They educate and raise awareness across the agency to ensure an accessibility-by-default approach is taken. They also play an important role in shaping and reinforcing inclusive behaviours within the agency.

To ensure inclusive communication, we consult with equity networks and communities including:

- Racialized Persons Advisory Committee
- 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex plus additional identities Advisory Committee
- Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Advisory Circle

These groups review proposed content to make sure it is accessible to their communities.

Our E-Communications team is responsible for the intranet site, the agency's social media channels, and the agency's public-facing website. Our team uses web templates, styles and formats that make it easier for those using adaptive technology to use the web content.

The Communications Directorate refer to and use the Treasury Board Secretariat's guidance and tools for web development and when working on social media communications. The guidance and tools are based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines developed by the [World Wide Web Consortium's](#) *Web Accessibility Initiative*. The World Wide Web Consortium is a well-respected group whose guidance has been adopted by many countries all over the world.

The agency is a member of the federal government's Digital Solutions Working Group, which helps us to adopt best practices on accessibility from and share lessons learned with other federal departments and agencies.

Lastly, the Communications Directorate can engage and consult directly with its internal and external audiences, as resources permit. This lets us receive feedback from surveys and to conduct usability testing. In this way, important accessibility issues can be highlighted and corrected. This feedback helps us continually improve our accessibility efforts.

Goals and performance measures

Our priority is to make sure our communications products and tools follow the accessibility standards and guidelines that exist (for example, the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity, web content accessibility guidelines, etc.).

We have these important goals for Communications in the next 3 years:

- We want all the information from our agency to be made and shared in the most accessible way possible
    - We expect our communications products to score at least 90% when they are measured against the Government of Canada's Accessibility Standard
- We want everyone, both inside and outside our agency, to have equal and fair access to all our communications products, such as websites, videos, social media and graphics
    - All our communications products should follow the Government of Canada rules on communications and accessibility

Note: It is almost impossible to reach 100% compliance because the web is constantly changing. But we are always working towards 100% compliance.

Barriers

Barriers in communication are those things that make it difficult for employees or people outside of the agency to get the information they need. Here are some well-known barriers:

Government jargon

Government language, especially legal language, can confuse and intimidate people. Using plain language can help everyone understand and participate more equitably.

Knowledge and awareness are also key for non-verbal communication with persons with disabilities. Access to American Sign Language or Langue des signes québécoise can further help employees and agency partners and clients use our information.

Medium of communication

While digital communications have increased in importance and have made it easier for people to get our information, we also understand that not everyone uses social media or the internet. We use multiple media to communicate important information so that we can reach all Canadians. We work with traditional media outlets as well, like news channels, so that we can reach people who prefer these other types of communication.

Document accessibility

To make screen readers work well for people with low vision or who are blind, documents need to be accessible and organized logically. This allows screen readers to interpret and read aloud the content effectively. To make documents accessible we use cascading style sheets with headings and single column layout and avoid tables that can confuse screen readers. We check documents using various accessibility-validation tools to make sure meet accessibility standards. This applies to all documents, including Word, PDFs and forms.

Action plan

The Communications Directorate is eager to keep working with its partners to reduce and eliminate barriers. Funding will be needed to hire more people to help check the accessibility of web pages and other products and to address any new barriers we find.

Here are some things we could do if resources are provided for accessibility work, listed by the branch that would lead them:

1. Strategic Policy Branch and E-Communications

In the next 4 to 6 months, we would like to get outside experts to review our external website for accessibility issues. We would ask them to provide us with a list of problems

and suggestions on how to fix them. The list will show us how well we are following the rules now, and, as we check and fix more content, we can measure our progress against it.

Once the exercise above is completed, using the above list for reference, we will write a detailed project plan that will identify and prioritize the work we need to do to make sure our site meets accessibility standards.

2. Strategic Policy Branch and Creative Services

Between 2023 and 2025, we will look at all our audio-visual materials to see what needs to be improved to meet accessibility standards. This will give us a better idea of what we need to fix and how much it will cost. It will also help us create future plans and priorities.

We will then develop and implement a plan to improve our audio-visual materials and the agency's daily newsletter.

3. Human Resources Branch and Culture Directorate

Starting in 2023, we plan to host workshops on plain language every 3 months. These workshops will be taking place from January to March 2023 and again from April to June 2023. They will help all our employees learn how to communicate in an accessible way.

Information and communication technology

We make it a priority to have a workforce that includes people from different backgrounds. Making sure our employees and Canadians have access to the right technology tools, applications and services, both inside and outside the organization, is very important.

Starting with accessibility in IT

Implementing accessibility by design is the Information, Science, and Technology Branch's objective to be inclusive to the needs of our users. Ensuring that clients have meaningful options for interacting with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and that employees have access to adaptive technologies to support them. This, as well as building a sense of inclusiveness, promotes attraction and retention of employees who will be able to perform to their fullest potential. IT is a big part of how we do our jobs. It is important that employees can easily get the information, tools and technology they need, especially now when many of us are working online due to hybrid work arrangements.

Our Information, Science, and Technology Branch's Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program will work to meet these challenges and commitments.

This program was launched in January 2022 with the mandate of paving the way for barrier-free access to our agency's information, tools and technology and to address the long wait times for IT accommodations and a lack of adaptive technologies for persons with disabilities.

Areas of focus for the Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program:

Adaptive Technology Program: This program promotes accessibility and inclusion, and it is crucial to meet the needs of the current employees and future hires. This program will:

- Prioritize research and investments into modern adaptive hardware and software technologies used by persons with vision, hearing, speech, or mobility needs
- Implement agile, collaborative and streamlined processes and procedures for adaptive technologies, to remove barriers and to reduce wait times and ensure greater access for persons with disabilities

IT Accessibility Competency Centre: The centre will promote an accessibility-first mindset with respect to IT solutions. This centre will:

- Promote accessible and inclusive IT services and solutions, by providing specialist services in inclusive design, expert technical guidance and support on IT accessibility
- Oversee accessibility compliance project(s) to ensure that all agency applications and off-the-shelf solutions are assessed and updated to meet Treasury Board accessibility standards

The Accessibility Competency Centre's technological scope includes:

- Current projects and new major systems launched after 2022
- All regional and national CBSA internal and public-facing IT solutions
- All IT tools used by our employees, clients and travellers

This includes:

- Applications across all platforms that interact with our employees and clients of the CBSA
- CBSA's in-house developed IT solutions and tools on various platforms
- CBSA customized IT solutions and tools, which were originally obtained as open-source software, off-the-shelf commercial software or software developed by other companies or government departments

- IT solutions and tools that were not developed or modified in-house by CBSA, including open source, commercial-off-the-shelf and software developed by vendors or other government departments

Goals and performance measures

Priorities in Information and Communication Technology:

- Adaptive Technology Program: We want to make adaptive technology solutions more accessible
- Accessibility Competency Centre: We aim to ensure all our IT applications and services meet accessibility standards, and that our IT technical resources will be equipped to design and deliver applications and services that are accessible for everyone

Goals to achieve these priorities:

- Make IT usable by all
  - Ensure all our internal tools and applications meet accessibility standards in alignment with Treasury Board mandated timelines
- Develop and offer expertise on IT Accessibility
  - Fully staff the Accessibility Competency Centre in our Information, Science, and Technology Branch and have its services available
  - Provide training and tools to our employees
  - Develop learning pathways outlined by IT function
- Raise IT colleagues' awareness on accessibility requirements, how it applies to their work and where to go for information and guidance
  - Hold 2 awareness sessions internally each month
  - Survey IT colleagues to gauge their awareness of accessibility requirements
  - Aim for over 65% favourable responses (this number will increase once the baseline is established)
- Improve how quickly adaptive technologies are updated and made available
  - Create a clear intake process to request adaptive technologies and communicate this process
  - Define service standards for the intake process
  - Promote the intake process with hiring managers
- Ensure our employees are satisfaction with the IT tools and equipment they need to do their job well
  - Public Service Employee Survey results show improvement in satisfaction rate greater than 10% from baseline 2020 results on employee satisfaction with access to IT accommodations

- The Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program will follow up with employees within 15 working days after deploying technology solutions to address questions
- Conduct a satisfaction survey 6 months after defining and publishing the intake process, aiming for 80% or higher satisfaction
- Accessibility features are enabled on devices provided to agency employees from the start, including digital communication and collaboration tools
  - Number of tickets opened to have features enabled decreases by 85% by 2025. (Tickets for support to use the features will not be included in this count)

Barriers

Barriers in technology can make it difficult for employees and clients of the CBSA with disabilities to fully participate at work and in society. Here are some examples of these barriers:

Access to adaptive technologies

Getting adaptive technologies can be challenging because the process is not well known by employees and managers. This makes it tough for those who need these tools to do their jobs well. Access to adaptive technologies is also limited because not all software and hardware have security certifications.

Knowledge and awareness

Not knowing what tools and technologies are available to help employees with disabilities can be a problem. To fix this, we will provide more training and development to the Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program team to enhance their technical skills. This will help them support employees better.

Timeliness of the process

Right now, it can take too long to get adaptive technologies for new employees. This happens when there are too many rules, managers are unaware of the process, or there is a lack of appropriate tools. We are looking at the process to make sure new employees get what they need on time.

Technology and mobile application accessibility

The increasing use of technology and mobile applications can create barriers for people with disabilities. For example, biometric iris scanners do not work for people with synthetic eyes. Mobile applications can also be tricky if they are not made for people with vision or movement-related disabilities. During the pandemic, we saw this with the ArriveCan app which caused challenges for persons with disabilities. To make things

better, we give clear instructions, perform accessibility assessments and provide other options like paper forms to help people with different needs.

Action plan

1. Accessibility compliance in applications and services:
   - Evaluate existing IT products for baseline accessibility compliance from 2021 to 2025 and ongoing
   - Develop an action plan to improve accessibility of individual IT programs and services from 2022 to 2025
   - Invest in employees and build internal capacity with the right skills
2. **Ensuring adaptive tools for employees with disabilities:** Adaptive tools and technologies will be available and meet the needs of employees with disabilities.
   - Establish clear, streamlined processes with defined service standards to provide adaptive IT tools and technologies to employees from 2022 to 2024 and ongoing:
     a) The service standard will account for the assessment, certification of applications, procurement and installation
     b) An initial process has been defined and is monitored for effectiveness
   - Going forward, implement a sustainable and robust Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program by developing knowledge on adaptive technologies and disabilities:
     a) This includes research, online training, and communities of practice which will happen from 2021 to 2024
3. Ensure employees have timely access to adaptive technology, without creating additional barriers from 2021 to 2025.
4. **Improving IT accessibility governance:** We will support the Information, Science and Technology Branch by ensuring accessibility standards are:
   - Applied for new IT product procurement processes from 2022 to 2025
   - Integrated into project management governance by design for new IT projects from 2022 to 2025
5. **Equipping staff:** Equip IT professionals to design and deliver applications and services that are accessible for everyone:
   - Facilitate training and raise awareness to foster an accessibility-first mindset for digital and information-technology solutions from 2021 to 2025 (currently in progress)
   - Lead the development of an IT Accessibility Competency Centre, that will provide tools, guidance and training for the development of accessible applications and services from 2022 to 2025 (currently in progress)

- Enhance awareness and access to existing accessibility resources through various means like checklists, Accessibility Assessment Toolkit, emails, newsletters, training sessions from 2022 to 2025, ongoing
6. **Consulting with persons with disabilities:** We will consult with persons with disabilities from 2021 to 2025 and ongoing to ensure accessibility:
   - Engage with employees with disabilities on the accessibility of information tools and technology through surveys and consultations
   - Staff key positions with persons with disabilities to gain insights in order to address barriers
   - Periodically survey employees on their interactions with the Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program and the support they received
7. Increasing program knowledge on accessibility issues:
   - Develop knowledge about different abilities and disabilities and accommodation solutions in the workplace from 2021 to 2025 and ongoing through training and consulting persons with disabilities

The design and delivery of programs and services

Policies and programs

The review of the agency's policies and programs is a joint initiative between the business lines, namely Travellers Branch, Commercial and Trade Branch, and Intelligence and Enforcement Branch. We are also collaborating with those responsible for the Employment, Communications, and the Built Environment priority areas. This review will initially cover materials and processes that impact our employees and clients within these 3 branches.

Our manuals and guidance materials need to align with the new accessibility standards outlined in the act and the Canadian Transportation Agency's accessible transportation regulations. The regulations cover a wide range of areas, including logistics, security, and border screening services. Consequently, we must carefully consider various aspects while developing an approach for the design and delivery of policies, programs and services.

This initiative is a long-term commitment that extends until 2040. To kickstart this effort, the first 3 years will be a formative period. This initial phase will allow us to establish a robust approach that leads to meaningful and sustained changes while managing limited implementation. Our aim is to create a strong foundation and a flexible plan for broader implementation in future iterations of this plan.

In the next 3 years (2023 to 2025), our scope is to ensure that all branches have clear accessibility guidelines and frameworks for designing policies and programs. These should not only meet but exceed the requirements outlined in the act and *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*. Our goal is to ensure that policies and programs are designed to be accessible by default.

This includes developing guidance related to logistics and services that assist persons with disabilities in meeting their disability-related needs. We also aim to expedite the border clearance process specifically for persons with disabilities and any support person travelling with them. These developments will provide valuable insights for future accessibility plans in the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services area.

Throughout the implementation of this plan, we will follow change management principles to ensure that the need for change is well understood (understanding the 'why'). This will increase the likelihood of successful and lasting change.

Goals and performance measures

In this area, we have 6 key goals:

- **Create inclusive policies and programs:** Create tools for policy writers so they can draft barrier-free policies and programs for our employees and clients
- **Universal access:** Ensure that all our clients, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have access to our services
- **Legal compliance:** Ensure that our programs and activities will fully comply with the *Act and Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*
- **Accessibility across corporate policies and practices:** We aim to make all our corporate policies and practices fully accessible. We want people with disabilities to be fully integrated into all aspects of our agency's operations
- **Equipping our employees:** Our employees will have the skills and knowledge needed to develop and manage programs and services that are accessible
- **Community involvement:** We will involve the communities impacted by our policies

To measure or assess our progress, we will use the following performance measures:

- Conduct surveys and establish feedback loops and employee consultation cycles to gather input on the accessibility of our programs and policies
- Consult with program and policy owners to determine the percentage of policies and programs that have been reviewed and updated based on accessibility guidelines
- Respond to public feedback within the established Canada Border Services Agency's Service standards

Barriers

We have identified the following barriers that affect our ability to align with the *Government of Canada's Accessibility Standard*:

Knowledge gaps

One barrier is the lack of familiarity with the concepts being promoted among many employees in our branches. New employees also need to be familiarized with our accessibility approach. The Government has introduced the use of Gender Based Analysis Plus as an analytical method to analyze policies and programs from diverse perspectives to understand the potential impact on various groups. We have a dedicated Gender Based Analysis Plus centre of responsibility, and there is training available with the Canada School of Public Service on this topic for policy advisors and analysts.

Unconscious biases

Unconscious biases negatively impact the society. Recognizing and addressing these biases is a crucial step in embracing diversity and inclusion and ensuring accessible policies and procedures. Employees need to be aware of their personal biases, learn how to avoid unconscious bias when making decisions, and review their actions, behaviours and beliefs to reduce biases.

Outdated policies and programs

In addition to being inaccessible, some of our agency's policies and programs need to be updated, which requires a significant amount of effort and time. This adds an extra layer of complexity as we strive to meet the accessibility guidelines.

Action plan

The actions and tools being developed and implemented by the other 6 priority areas (employment, built environment, procurement, communications, information and communication technology, design and delivery of programs and services, transportation) will have a direct impact on the design and delivery of programs and services areas and will be reflected in the next 3-year plan.

The Travellers Branch, Commercial and Trade Branch, and Intelligence and Enforcement Branch are responsible for the following activities:

1. **Accessible transportation training:** We will continue to offer the Accessible Transportation Obligations training for frontline employees (mandatory) to meet the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations* (ongoing)
2. **Staff training:** We will identify additional employee training options to make sure our teams have the skills needed to address accessibility in new and updated policies and programs throughout the 2023 to 2024 fiscal year

3. **Accessibility awareness:** We will develop guidance and tools to equip staff involved in drafting policies and programs with the accessibility lens (2023 to 2025 and ongoing)
4. **Policy and program inventory:** We will create an inventory of policies and programs, and other related documents across the branches, to help us understand the scope of our work (2023 to 2025)
5. **Identifying future changes:** We will classify and prioritize programs, policies and supporting documentation that need to be updated in the near future (2023 to 2025)
6. **Mechanisms to verify accessibility:** We will develop a mechanism to ensure that new and revised policies, programs and supporting materials meet the new accessibility standards before their introduction (2024 to 2025)
7. **Prioritization:** We will prioritize policies and programs for review based on the inventory, planned updates and risks
8. **Accessibility testing:** Over a 3-year period, from 2023 to 2025, we will review new and modified materials to assess their accessibility, according to the standards outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act* and *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*
9. **Future planning:** From 2025 to 2026, we will create a schedule for the subsequent 3 years (2026 to 2029)
10. **Performance indicators:** We will develop quantitative and qualitative performance indicators to assess future progress once these actions are fully implemented (ongoing)

Service delivery

Goals and performance measures

Currently, the agency is in the midst of a significant border modernization initiative which will transform our business and operations to improve client experience. As we modernize our programs and services, we see an opportunity to review our business processes and systems with an accessibility lens. Some examples of these modernization activities include:

Traveller Modernization: This initiative will improve border safety and security by providing CBSA officers with more tools and technology to process travellers efficiently. It will also introduce easy-to-use solutions for employees and travellers, including digital self-service processing and the expanded use of biometrics to verify identity.

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) Assessment and Revenue Management Project: Simplifying the process for importing goods into Canada, leading to cost reduction and improved consistency and trade rule compliance.

Gordie Howe International Bridge port of entry: Inclusivity is at the centre of the design of this port of entry. The facility will be built meeting accessibility requirements with wheelchair access and information provided to travellers in braille and talk to text.

The ability of our frontline officers to provide inclusive services depends on the progress made in the 6 goals and performance measures mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Over the next 3 years, the plans and priorities for service delivery include:

- Increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in operational and frontline roles
- Enhancing knowledge and awareness of inclusive practices and unconscious bias.
- Improving training for transportation service providers to ensure equal access to safe, respectful and dignified transportation services in accordance with accessible transportation regulations
- Developing service-oriented policies to assist persons with disabilities with communication needs and providing accessible border and security screening processes upon request
- Ensuring clients are informed of their rights and can provide feedback will help guide corrective actions

Barriers

There are also barriers that exist related to service delivery. To a large extent, these have been covered in other sections of this plan. However, we have identified a few specific barriers:

Technology and systems

In our efforts to modernize our business, we have an opportunity to embrace technologies that can enhance accessibility. However, it is crucial to be mindful of potential unintended consequences for persons with disabilities. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of involving persons with disabilities in user testing during the design and development of these technologies.

People

Our agency has nearly 6,000 frontline officers who serve at over 1,200 different access points, both nationally and internationally. Attitudinal barriers and unconscious bias have had a negative impact on persons with disabilities. To address this, we are committed to ensuring all our employees receive training on unconscious bias. Additionally, our cultural transformation initiative aims to cultivate a more understanding and empathetic workforce.

Language and communication

For travellers who are hard of hearing and rely on sign language, communicating at Ports of Entry can be challenging since not all officers are proficient in Sign Languages. To address this, we see an opportunity for our agency to leverage technology to facilitate communication for those who are hard of hearing.

Action plan

The service delivery area does not have its own action plan as part of the agency's accessibility plan. In our initial accessibility plan, the primary focus will be on developing and implementing actions and tools in the 6 areas mentioned previously. Once these actions and tools are prepared for deployment, they will have a direct impact on the [design and delivery of programs and services area](). It is at that point that the service delivery area will have its own plan.

Transportation

Our agency facilitates the movement of legitimate travellers and trade. We manage 117 land-border crossings and operate at 13 international airports. Additionally, our officers carry out marine operations at major ports, various marinas and reporting stations. They also perform operations at 27 rail sites. To enforce our acts and regulations and ensure the safety of our country and its people, our officers are present at these facilities. It is important to note that the responsibility for "transportation" lies with the owner/operators, who are regulated by the Canadian Transportation Agency.

We own and operate our fleet vehicles internally. Any emerging transportation barriers will be monitored and addressed internally in future Accessibility Reports.

Provisions to meet Canadian Transportation Agency regulations

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is not a transportation inspector nor a provider. However, we follow the Canadian Transportation Agency's regulations for transportation service providers.

Part 1 Requirements applicable to transportation service providers

In our 2023 to 2025 plan, we will audit the following elements to ensure they are already being met. We will also identify gaps and create plans to address these gaps. Implementation plans will be clarified in the following 3-year Plan (2026 to 2028).

Initially, the requirements to be audited include:

Communication to people with disabilities: we will share information in an accessible manner with people who have disabilities by:

- Sharing information in a way that works with tools for people with disabilities
- Providing information in large print, Braille, or electronic format if it's in paper form
- Offering visual information if it is in audio format and vice versa
- Responding quickly if someone asks for information in a different format

Publishing information: we will share specific information on the CBSA websites including:

- A notice saying CBSA follows the Canadian Transportation rules
- Information about services for people with disabilities and any conditions
- Details about how passengers can complain

Communication with people with disabilities: there are several important considerations when our employees are talking to people with disabilities. These include:

- Understanding the person's disability, especially if they cannot see, hear, or communicate easily
- Knowing if the person uses special devices to help them hear, see, or communicate
- Using communication methods that work for the person, like sign language or clear and simple language

Phone systems: CBSA has a toll-free phone number and a teletypewriter line that people can call for information. Where these phone numbers are listed, we must also:

- Give the option of using email or a relay service for people who are deaf or have communication difficulties
- Share details on how to use these services with the phone number

Website access: we will update our website including:

- Offer options for people with disabilities that do not rely on the website
- Share contact information for those services along with the website address
- Make sure the website follows accessibility guidelines

Announcements and kiosks: For automated kiosks where the CBSA owns the software, they must follow digital accessibility standards.

Assistance with kiosks: If someone with a disability asks for help using a kiosk, a CBSA employee will assist without delay.

Kiosk software maintenance: Kiosk software must be in good working order. If a kiosk's software has issues, CBSA will fix it quickly. If we cannot fix it immediately, we will provide alternatives to people with disabilities.

Personnel training: CBSA is committed to ensuring our employees receive accessibility training on how to help people with disabilities use our services (Sections 16 to 19 of the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations).* This training includes information on:

- different types of accessibility barriers
- types of assistance
- how to communicate with person with disabilities
- the role of a support person or service dog

Part 5 Accessibility Requirements Applicable to CBSA

Border clearance

As per the applicable policy, during the border clearance process, a Border Service Officer will expedite the process for persons with disabilities and their support persons by:

- directing them to the front of the line
- providing assistance throughout the clearance process (may include verbal or visual cues or additional instructions, completing a declaration card or by collecting a verbal declaration)
- if the person must undergo more extensive clearance, we will place and retrieve personal items on the counter for inspection

Security screening for air travellers

Security screening, as referred to in the Canadian Transportation Agency's regulations for transportation service providers for air travellers, is conducted by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. The CBSA does not carry out security screening for air travellers.

The CBSA has an immigration security screening program. This program is different than the security screening mentioned in the regulations. Immigration security screening is part of the process for foreign nationals who apply for a temporary resident visa, student visa, permanent residency status, or refugee status. Any foreign nationals with

a disability and support persons travelling with them will be offered an expedited border clearance process.

Signage

As part of our [Built Environment initiative](#), signage initiatives have been identified in line with the rules in sections 4.5.3 to 4.5.7 of the Accessible Design for Self-Service Interactive Devices Standard (Canadian Standard Association B651-18). These include:

- strategically placing signs near washrooms and exits
- positioning signs to avoid shadows and glare, with a non-reflective surface
- clearly visible against their background

If the sign is electronic, we also need to ensure that:

- The text, symbols and images move slowly across the screen and are easy to see against their background (but not in red on a black background)
- The sign meets the rules in sections 4.5.3 to 4.5.5 of the Accessible Design for Self-Service Interactive Devices Standard (Canadian Standard Association B651-18)

Our end goal is to provide a barrier-free environment for both internal employees and external clients.

Mandatory declaration signage

Small mandatory declaration messages following the Canadian Standards Association requirements have been installed in CBSA areas. This provides travellers with advanced information about the border process.

Consultations with the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority and the Canadian Standards Association are being conducted to explore alternative solutions for larger mandatory messages. In the meantime, a compact and durable tactile handout is provided to travellers upon arrival to Canada.

Consultations

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is committed to including the perspectives of people with disabilities in its accessibility planning. We are taking the time to listen and learn to ensure that persons with disabilities are a part in developing solutions to make our agency barrier free.

We have consulted persons with disabilities and experts in the field in the development of the current plan and will continue consulting those with expertise and lived experiences for all future accessibility plans.

We will be reviewing existing policies, programs and services with a focus on accessibility. We understand the importance of having regular consultations. That is why we will continue to consult and engage with persons with disabilities when creating new programs and activities, as well as our plans.

Our agency will make sure that we integrate new accessibility standards as they become available. We will also use the feedback received through our formal feedback process into our activities. An example of this is how we have improved the ArriveCan application throughout the pandemic by integrating accessibility features.

In preparation for the plan

In developing this plan, we consulted employees with disabilities who work at the CBSA as well as a range of different interested parties and disability organizations. We recognize that there has been consultation fatigue within the persons with disability community. In order to minimize this, we used research and information from other federal government consultations with persons with disabilities.

Internal consultations

In July 2022, we conducted our first round of internal consultations, open to all agency employees, including equity-seeking groups. This helped shape our "What We Heard Report." A total of 75 participants from various branches, regions and positions, representing different disabilities. We had a total of 8 sessions which were conducted virtually in both official languages, with sign language interpretation available. These sessions provided valuable insights in the development of our Accessibility Plan. Participants had multiple consultation methods:

- Group sessions
- Individual sessions
- Email submissions

Facilitators framed discussions around 5 key questions

1. Defining "accessibility-confident"
2. Open conversations: for authenticity at work, raising awareness about disabilities, engaging with managers and preferred communication with employers
3. Feeling cared for and valued in the workspace
4. Identifying changes that could have a significant impact
5. Encouraging self-identification to improve representation

Key findings

Feedback touched on all areas of our accessibility plan. Participants identified barriers related to various disabilities including fear of reprisal and not wanting to be seen as a burden. They emphasized the need for an empathetic, trusting and inclusive workplace culture. Suggestions included the establishment of a guidance centre for employees and managers, open conversations about duty to accommodate, clearer disability definitions and support groups for those with lived experiences.

Participants addressed specific areas of concern, such as:

1. Employment
   - Lack of training for management and employees
   - Issues with accommodations, like the need for doctors' notes and flexibility
   - Delays in Border Services Officers' uniforms for officers of different sizes
   - The need for clear career paths for persons with disabilities
   - Normalizing conversations about disability, inclusion, accommodations and accessibility
2. The Built Environment
   - Meeting and conference rooms are not accessible
   - Challenges faced when using alternate entrances, emphasizing differences.
   - The importance of considering accessibility in off-site meetings
   - Providing proper equipment in boardrooms for officers' comfort
   - Ensuring accessibility in new workspaces, such as electric push buttons for opening doors
3. The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities
   - Suggestions for accessible tools including sit-stand workstations for travellers that require a lower counter
   - Ensuring timely procurement and backup suppliers to avoid delays
   - Addressing transportation accessibility issues with employee shuttle buses
   - Insisting on accessible software in both official languages
4. Information and Communication Technology
   - Concerns about the accessibility of second-language training
   - Limitations due to security concerns of firewalls, affecting access to necessary hardware and software

Additionally, participants highlighted accessibility considerations that affect multiple areas

- A centralized fund for accessibility-related requests
- Transportation to the office can be a challenge for employees with disabilities
- Inclusive consideration for non-visible disabilities

- Training and tools requirements for accessible communications, emphasizing the use of sign language and bilingualism to promote accessibility
- Accessible and inclusive elements need to be built into our policies and procedures as a default

Results

Feedback from these consultations significantly contributed to the creation of our Accessibility Plan. We are committed to continuing consultations, adjustments and improvements to create a respectful, accessible workplace that allows employees to bring their full range of skills and knowledge to the forefront. Our vision is to foster a workplace that values both employee and client's well-being who use our services.

As a deliberate effort, we have structured the Accessibility Office under the Human Resources Branch and the Accessibility and Adaptive Technology Program under the Information, Science, and Technology Branch with employees who have disabilities or lived experiences to enhance our initiatives.

External consultations

In line with the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*, we engaged with 30+ disability organizations to develop our accessible transportation training. We also received feedback about our Accessibility Plan.

Consultations questions

- Types of barriers faced in the border process for persons with disabilities
- Types of assistance that would help
- Types of disabilities that should be addressed in the CBSA's training material and Accessibility Plan
- Any information that would be beneficial to support CBSA in identifying challenges and support implementation of solutions and systems to help ensure adherence to the current applicable Accessibility mandates

Key points from these consultations

Consultations occurred via email, MS Teams and phone from March to July 2021, and again from April to May 2024. The barriers identified pertained to various disabilities: mobility, auditory, visual, mental health, developmental and learning.

Kudos and compliments were received from several organizations:

- CBSA's plan is well written
- CBSA's commitment to improving the representation and experience of persons with disabilities in its workforce is commendable

- The plan's focus on training front-line officers and managers on inclusion and accessibility is a positive step

Suggestions and feedback were provided on the following aspects:

Employment barriers and solutions

- Continue to reduce barriers in hiring processes including online applications, pre-screening, and competency testing; inaccessible job ads and interview processes create further barriers
- Work proactively with disability organizations to find best match candidates instead of working through inventories (inventories can be a barrier to people with intellectual disabilities)
- Include proactive hiring and career development of people with intellectual disabilities in CBSA hiring strategies, as there is a high rate of unemployment in this group
- Continue to address attitudinal barriers in all CBSA processes and training (not just within recruitment)
- Providing timely accommodations for employees

Built environment barriers and solutions

- Recommendations for enhancing accessibility for hard-of-hearing travellers/clients.
- Install strobe-style fire alarms or visual cues
- Deal with the challenges posed by plexiglass or glass partitions
- Minimize issues created by speakers or microphones when interacting with hard-of-hearing individuals

Barriers to information and communication technology

- Leverage existing technologies that may be a solution to the stated barriers of emerging technologies
    - Legacy technology solutions (e.g., those developed within the last 5 to 10 years) may adequately meet CBSA requirements

Barriers related to communications, other than information communications technologies

- Ensure all materials are in plain language
- Provide alternative formats on the CBSA website such as transcription, closed captioning, American Sign Language, and Langue des Signes du Québec

Barriers to procurement of goods, services and facilities

- Recommendations for personal amplifier devices like the Bellman MaxiPro, which provide clear and natural-sounding speech via Bluetooth-enabled devices
- Counterloop systems to facilitate communication with hard-of-hearing travellers/clients wearing hearing aids

Barriers in design and delivery of programs and services

- The need for On-Demand Video Remote American Sign Language or Langue des Signes du Québec interpreting on-site at the borders
- Provide assistance to travellers who are blind or partially sighted to locate and confirm their belongings
- Ensure screen reader-friendly kiosks
- Use visuals/images in addition to plain language: this can also benefit employees and the people who use CBSA services with an intellectual disability, but also those with low literacy, people who don't speak the official languages etc.

Barriers and solutions in service delivery

- Expedite border clearance process at airports, especially for those with hidden mobility disabilities
- Enhance clarity and assistance for travellers who are blind or partially sighted during the declaration process
- Focus on building rapport between Border Service Officers and individuals as the border process can cause anxiety for some
- Introduce officers and offer options for using declaration kiosks or speaking to an agent
- Address the challenges created by masks that impede lip reading
- Have alternative formats of communication materials at the border such as declaration cards
- Training for officers should include how to assist blind or partially sighted individuals with guide dogs
- Training should cover interaction with guide dogs and their handlers, requesting permission before touching the dog, not separating guide dogs from their handlers, and allowing guide dog teams to carry food across the border
- Provide training about biases and accommodations for persons living with non-visible disabilities
- Training/resources are needed to support officers to interact with travellers/clients who are hard of hearing including the importance of eye contact, getting the attention of Deaf individuals, and using appropriate terms when addressing them

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Barriers in accessibility feedback and solution

- Periodically review feedback processes in place and update promptly
- Implement transparent and straightforward feedback mechanisms allowing community members to easily share their experiences and suggestions for improvement

General barriers and solutions

- Allocate funding to cover general accessibility needs that are not structural in nature
- Adopt an intersectional perspective in the development of the Accessibility Plan to understand and address compounding barriers (barriers faced by individuals who have a disability and also face barriers from other identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, etc.)
- Have clear goals and timelines within the plan
- Address how CBSA ensures the safety and well-being of Persons with Disabilities during emergencies (e.g., evacuation procedures), including accessible emergency alerts, evacuation procedures, and ensuring that staff are trained to assist individuals with various disabilities in crisis situations

Development of an external advisory committee

- Provide opportunities for people with lived experience to evaluate new solutions (e.g. accessible self-serve kiosks)
- Organize focus groups where members of the different communities can come together to discuss with intervenor and interpreters present
- Invite members of these communities to participate in accessibility committees
- Engage Guide Dog User organizations that support blind and partially sighted individuals
- Talk about how Canadians and international travelers who have disabilities will be served (e.g., the use of video relay services to communicate with Canadians who self-identify as requiring American Sign Language) but this should be addressed with the revisions that have been made

Many of the disability organizations that were consulted expressed interest in participating in external consultations on an ongoing basis.

Results

These insights informed our accessibility work. They played a pivotal role in shaping the training course, helping identify barriers in the border process and providing valuable suggestions to facilitate access during this process. They also informed the revision and implementation of our Accessibility Plan.

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Additional accessibility consultations

After consulting with our Persons with Disability Advisory Committee, we determined it would be a good idea to see if we could learn from the results of consultations completed by other federal departments. The goal of this was to avoid consultation fatigue which happens when those consulted feel overloaded with activities like consultations.

In order to minimize this, we did research on previous consultation processes. We were able to learn from:

- Industry experts in IT, including Gartner and InfoTech
- Other government departments with experience providing adaptive technologies
- Federal government communities of practice in accessibility
- Non-government organizations with expertise in the Web content Accessibility Guidelines

We actively participated in federal government communities of practice, using an accessibility approach.

We also consulted Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency, both leaders in this field with decades of experience in accessibility and the provision of adaptive technologies. We leveraged these organizations' best practices and learned from their leaders to launch our program on adaptive technology and IT accessibility compliance.

We worked closely with Shared Service Canada's Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program, seeking their expert advice and considerations on the development of our accessible IT program while using their programs interchangeably with employees seeking interim solutions.

Upcoming consultations

CBSA will continue with it is internal consultations going forward. Future external consultations are planned with disability organizations and members of the public who use our services. Our goal is to partner with community agencies and build long term relationships through this engagement.

External advisory committee

The CBSA is investigating the creation of an advisory committee which will include representatives from the disability community. The members on the committee will have various disabilities and experiences. They will provide insight into the development of future accessibility plans and progress reports as well as provide feedback on programs and services based on their lived experience.

Disability organizations

We will also continue to consult with disability management organizations. CBSA collaborates and consults with many of these organizations already and will continue to engage with these subject matter experts as part of our agency's commitment to "Nothing without us".

External accessibility events

Our agency will also participate in conferences, seminars and events organized by external disability advocacy groups and organizations to gather comments and feedback. This will allow us to gain important information and feedback from organizations whom we did not hear back from in our initial consultation.

Social media

The CBSA will leverage social media platforms to invite feedback from the public. This will be done on our different social media platforms (Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook).

Individuals will be given instructions through these channels on how to provide anonymous feedback.

Annex A: Glossary

From [Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat](#) unless otherwise indicated.

Accessibility

The degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all. (Source: *Accessible Canada Act*)

Accessibility confidence

The ability of organizations to "manage disability as a business priority related to customer experience, talent, productivity, innovation, new product development, brand reputation and investment in human potential." (Source: [Business Disability International](#)).

Barrier

The act defines a barrier as "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 a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or functional limitation." (Source: *Accessible Canada Act*)

Disability

The act defines disability as "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."

Discrimination

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.

There are 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (that is, based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered).

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. (Source: Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion).

Employee

A person employed in the public service.

Equity seeking groups

A group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes.

Persons with disabilities

The *Employment Equity Act* defines 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.

Self-identification

Employees providing employment equity information for statistical purposes in analyzing and monitoring the progress of employment equity groups in the federal public service and for reporting on workforce representation. (Source: Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018).

Tactile signage

A system of raised pictograms, lettering and dome braille that provides information for blind or partially sighted individuals.

Teletypewriter

The teletypewriter phone number listed on the contact page refers to an alternate phone number connected to a device that enables phone communication through typed

messages for people who cannot or choose not to communicate verbally, typically used by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, or who have a speech-related disabilities.

Workforce availability

For the core public administration, refers to the estimated availability of people in designated groups as a percentage of the workforce population. For the core public administration, workforce availability is based on the population of Canadian citizens who:

- are active in the workforce
- work in those occupations that correspond to the occupations in the core public administration

Availability is estimated from 2011 Census data. Estimates for persons with disabilities are derived from data, also collected by Statistics Canada, in the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. (Source: *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018*).

Annex B: References

Consultation Report: Priorities for engagement, accessibility standards and research from 2020 to 2022 - Accessibility Standards Canada

The Treasury Board Secretariat, specifically the Office of Public Service Accessibility has published a guiding strategy for the Government of Canada titled Nothing without us: an accessibility strategy for the public service of Canada. This strategy acts as the blueprint for departments when they create their accessibility plans. At its core, this strategy revolves around 5 interconnected goals that guide the public service in its response to the requirements of the act:

- Improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities
- Enhance the accessibility of the built environment
- Ensure that information and communications technology is usable by all
- Equip public servants to design and deliver programs and services that are accessible
- Foster a public service that is confident in matters of accessibility