



NRC-CNRC

The NRC Accessibility Plan 2023-2025



National Research
Council Canada

Conseil national de
recherches Canada

Canada

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Messages from executives

Message from the President

I am pleased to introduce the NRC Accessibility Plan 2023-2025. The plan outlines concrete actions and priority areas for our organization to create a respectful and inclusive workplace and culture, and better serve Canadians accessing our services. A diverse workforce can lead to great innovation—and with this plan, we aim to be an organization where all employees have equal access to opportunities in supporting Canada’s science, technology and innovation ecosystem.

The 3-year plan was developed as a result of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act), which came into effect in 2019 to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. With this Act, it is no longer the responsibility of persons with disabilities to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility—it is a shared responsibility. As a federal research and development organization, embedding accessibility into what we do helps extend this lens to research and innovation.

To ensure accessibility is at the forefront of the NRC’s strategic planning and daily operations, we have identified equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility as priorities in our upcoming NRC 2024-29 Strategic Plan. We need to build accessibility into everything we do: our policies, procedures, programs and services.

I invite you to review the plan and join us in serving our employees and Canadians without barriers. We are all in this together.

Iain Stewart
President

Message from accessibility and disability inclusion co-champions

As the NRC accessibility and disability inclusion co-champions, we are committed to creating and maintaining an accessible workplace. Greater accessibility creates the conditions where people can thrive by bringing their different abilities to the workplace. We need to be better prepared on how to set up everyone for success so that we provide support and guidance that will bring out the best in them. Organizations that develop diverse workforces and value persons with disabilities enjoy more innovative teams and are more likely to retain talent, among other benefits.

This plan will help improve the experiences of employees with disabilities as well as those who are using our services. In developing the plan, we learned that there is a desire for a stronger, more proactive culture of accessibility.

In the end, it's about creating a workplace that is fundamentally bringing an accessibility-first mindset to everything we do. We all have a role to play to help eliminate barriers and enable the fuller participation of every Canadian in work and society. Most importantly because it's the right thing to do.

Dale MacMillan

Vice-President, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer

Julie Lefebvre

Director General, Security and Disruptive Technologies Research Centre

General

The NRC leverages research to ensure Canada is ready for the challenges of tomorrow. Our organization supports industrial innovation, the advancement of knowledge, and technology development.

The NRC collaborates with the most creative and solution-driven minds from academia, government and industry to bring cutting-edge products and services to market. Our national network of specialized facilities, scientists and innovation advisors helps small businesses scale up, export, and compete on the world stage. In 2021-2022, the NRC Industrial Research Assistance Program worked with over 9,000 clients—with 3,600 of these small and medium-sized enterprises receiving funding—and provided advisory services to over 11,000 firms.

At the NRC, we know that diversity enables excellence in research and innovation. We are committed to a diverse and representative workforce, a safe and respectful work environment, and contributing to a more inclusive Canadian innovation system.

Feedback on the accessibility plan

Feedback is essential to developing our future accessibility plans, which will build upon the [NRC Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#). Comments, recommendations and ideas from our employees and members of the public are a valuable part of this feedback. We commit to documenting and reviewing all feedback and addressing concerns as quickly as possible. We will acknowledge receipt of feedback on accessibility unless it is submitted anonymously.

Examples of enquiries and feedback:

- Requesting a copy of the accessibility plan, progress reports or feedback process
- Requesting alternate formats such as large text or braille
- Information about a barrier
- Comments about implementation of the action plan
- Contact the Manager of Workplace Programs to provide feedback

To share feedback or submit an enquiry, complete the online [accessibility feedback form](#). You can identify yourself or submit feedback anonymously. You will receive acknowledgment of receipt in the same means by which your feedback was received unless it was submitted anonymously.

The main contact for the NRC's accessibility plan is the manager of Workplace Programs.

Telephone: 613-993-9101
TTY: 613-949-3042
Toll-free: 1-877-NRC-CNRC or
1-877-672-2672
Email: info@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca

Mailing address:
1200 Montreal Road,
Building M-58, W-103
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6

Executive summary

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) establishes the goal of making Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. It came into effect on July 11, 2019, and applies to all federally regulated sectors including the Government of Canada. The NRC accessibility plan is structured to include elements based on the guidance from the Office of Public Service Accessibility. According to the Act, a barrier is defined 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 an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Our first accessibility plan is based on NRC foundational priority areas and the areas outlined in the Act:

The 2 NRC foundational areas of focus for the plan:

- organizational culture and change management
- governance and oversight

The Act priority areas of focus for the plan:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communications technology (ICT)
- communications (other than ICT)
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

To make the NRC and the broader public service accessible, we need a strong foundation of deliberate, persistent and strategic action, and an overall shift in culture. This culture shift is how Canada will achieve the overall goal of becoming fully accessible.

The accessibility plan guides our efforts over the coming 3 years and includes regular monitoring, consultation and feedback. The consultation process reflects the “Nothing Without Us” principle.

Consultations

Over the past several years, the NRC has taken steps to identify its overall agenda and priorities to advance equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), better understand accessibility requirements, assess and understand the current state, and identify the barriers and actions included in this plan. To date, we completed several key actions and consultations including these:

- We developed the NRC Workforce and Workplace Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021–2024. This plan set out goals and actions to increase the diversity of the NRC’s workforce, including attracting and hiring more persons with disabilities.
- Following steady but slow progress in addressing under-representation, in February 2022 the NRC set representation and hiring goals for persons with disabilities. Progress is regularly monitored through senior management oversight, including quarterly reports. As of September 2022, employees who voluntarily self-identified as persons with disabilities represent 3.9% of our workforce relative to labour market availability of 8.5%. This means 45.8% representation relative to the available workforce in Canada.
- We appointed NRC co-champions for accessibility and disability inclusion in July 2022 to support, amplify and promote programs and initiatives designed to support the employment, advancement and full participation of persons with disabilities. These leaders help drive management and employees toward change and encourage incorporating new ways of thinking into our workplace culture.
- In 2021, the Human Resources Branch engaged external experts to assist in a review and assessment of the NRC’s accessibility and employment systems. The review included consultations with employees with disabilities to identify barriers and support the development of the accessibility plan.
- In 2020 and 2021, the NRC examined barriers to accessibility in our built environment, including buildings and designated accessible parking. This process involved surveys and direct feedback from employees on accessibility barriers. The Real Property Planning and Management Branch, supported by external experts, completed 54 accessibility assessments of NRC buildings.
- In 2022, our Communications Branch developed an intranet portal to give employees tools and resources to create products that are accessible by design. The NRC Style Guide was also updated to address accessibility issues.
- In 2022, we consulted with employees with disabilities about the barriers listed within the accessibility plan. A common theme was a desire for a stronger and more proactive culture of accessibility at the NRC.
- Throughout the development of the plan, we consulted with a wide variety of external experts, central agencies and other government departments to leverage best practices and approaches.

In creating this new accessibility plan, we have gathered feedback, advice, ideas and distilled that information into concrete steps. The NRC is committed to focusing current and future efforts to address identified challenges, and to improve our responses so that we achieve faster results and make steady progress. We will continue to consult with persons with disabilities, advisory bodies, and other stakeholders throughout the implementation of the plan and on an ongoing basis.

The accessibility plan

Our plan includes the primary barriers identified through consultations and assessments to date. It also includes the specific actions to be taken to address each barrier over the course of the next 3 calendar years.

The plan includes a number of foundational elements that support our work across all areas as well as the specific pillars outlined in the Act.

Foundational elements

Organizational culture and change management

The NRC strives for a workplace culture that supports and fosters accessibility. Our culture and shared responsibility will support and sustain the important work across all areas of the plan.

Barrier 1: managers and employees lack awareness about accessibility including the goals of the Act.

Actions:

- Develop education and awareness campaigns to highlight barriers faced by persons with disabilities. This includes providing updates on the plan progress and promoting avenues for support and feedback.

Completion date: September 2023

- Develop training programs tailored for employees, supervisors and service providers to help them understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring accessibility and fostering a barrier-free workplace. Training will be delivered in accessible formats.

Completion date: December 2023

Lead: Human Resources Branch

Enabler: Communications Branch

Governance and oversight

A coordinated approach with regular monitoring and oversight is key to making steady and timely progress in advancing our objectives.

Barrier 2: lack of a coordinated approach for advancing accessibility.

Actions:

- Identify who is accountable for accessibility and establish clear roles and responsibilities for its implementation and decision-making.

Completion date: June 2023

- Establish advisory bodies for consultation on specific topics to advance accessibility. Advisory bodies may be established for ongoing engagement or for consultation on specific topics as appropriate.

Completion date: June 2023

- Publish annual progress reports starting in December 2023 on the implementation of the plan on the NRC's website.

Completion date: December 2025

Lead: Human Resources Branch, senior management

Enabler: Communications Branch

Areas under the *Accessible Canada Act*

Accessibility plans aim to identify, eliminate and prevent accessibility barriers related to a number of key areas or pillars—employment, built environment, information and communications technology (ICT), communications (other than ICT), procurement of goods, services and facilities, design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation. Not every pillar is relevant to every governmental department or agency in the same way. The following is a summary of the barriers and actions identified for the NRC in relation to these pillars.

Employment

The NRC is committed to being an accessible employer and strengthening the hiring, support, participation and retention of persons with disabilities. The following actions will help eliminate representation gaps and create an inclusive and barrier-free work environment where employees with disabilities can thrive.

Barrier 3: persons with disabilities are not recruited and represented at a level relative to the available workforce in Canada.

Actions:

- Implement and monitor goals and actions to increase the representation and hiring of persons with disabilities established as part of the Workforce and Workplace Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021–2024. Report representation and hiring data on a quarterly basis to NRC executives.

Completion date: September 2022

- Establish regular awareness campaigns on types of disabilities and their definitions within an employment equity context to encourage job applicants and employees to self-identify.

Completion date: March 2023

- Develop an outreach strategy to recruit persons with disabilities. Establish one or more strategic partnerships with organizations that advance employment of persons with disabilities to increase NRC hires and to better support and retain them in our workforce.

Completion date: September 2023

Barrier 4: employees are reporting that the current accommodation policy and process is lengthy and challenging to navigate.

Actions:

- Review and update the accommodation policy and streamline our practices to better support employees.
Completion date: December 2023
- Establish service standards for accommodation requests and monitor response times.
Completion date: December 2023
- Implement a standard practice to follow up with employees with disabilities who have submitted accommodation and adjustment requests to ensure they have the required tools and equipment.
Completion date: June 2024

Barrier 5: lack of community, sense of belonging and sources of support for persons with disabilities.

Actions:

- Create an NRC network for persons with disabilities and encourage ongoing participation.
Completion date: June 2023
- Promote the NRC mentoring program (Mentoring@the NRC) to mentors and mentees who identify as persons with disabilities.
Completion date: June 2023
- Promote on a regular basis available support services and avenues to report a concern, including the NRC ombud.
Completion date: April 2023

Lead: Human Resources Branch

Enabler: Communication Branch, service providers in the accommodation process, NRC ombud

Built environment

The NRC strives to ensure that its built environment is welcoming and accessible for employees, partners and members of the public. Our built environment includes buildings and workspaces.

Barrier 6: not all NRC buildings, parking facilities and designated drop-off zones are fully accessible.

Actions:

- Complete the remaining 3 accessibility assessments for buildings. As of October 2022, we completed a total of 54 building assessments.
Completion date: December 2023

- Establish the process to engage with persons with disabilities for the planning, implementation and post-implementation stages for new builds and retrofits to existing buildings to address accessibility.

Completion date: December 2024

- Utilize tools to help identify deficiencies with respect to accessibility issues in the management of real property assets (buildings).

Completion date: March 2024

- Engage with building owners for all NRC-leased facilities to develop strategies to address accessibility deficiencies.

Completion date: December 2024

Lead: Real Property Planning and Management Branch

Enabler: Human Resources Branch, Procurement Services

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Accessible ICT helps ensure barrier-free access to information, tools and digital resources for employees and clients. The long-term goal is to make digital platforms fully accessible for all.

Barrier 7: systems, tools and communications channels on our networks are not fully accessible.

Actions:

- Develop awareness and training requirements for IT professionals to gain better knowledge on accessibility.

Completion date: March 2024

- Commence regular, ongoing accessibility assessments of current websites and applications.

Completion date: March 2025

- Create an inventory of digital resources and prioritize and track their improvement.

Completion date: March 2024

- Develop accessibility requirement standards for procured IT solutions.

Completion date: December 2023

Barrier 8: the NRC does not have the necessary tools, processes and resources to support technology-related accommodation requests.

Actions:

- Develop and publish a list of software and tools available to enhance accessibility.

Completion date: March 2024

- Put a process in place to identify and prioritize software and hardware requests that help improve accessibility.

Completion date: March 2024

Lead: Knowledge, Information and Technology Services Branch, application business owners

Enabler: Client Service Centre

Communications, other than information and communication technologies

The NRC is committed to equipping and supporting NRC employees to acquire skills to apply accessibility standards and develop compliant communications products. All communications products in print and on digital platforms must be accessible and inclusive for all NRC employees and Canadians.

Barrier 9: not all internal and external communications products (print and online) are consistently accessible.

Actions:

- Identify existing online content that does not comply with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's standards on accessibility and guidelines for making communications products and activities accessible.

Completion date: March 2023

- Update existing non-compliant online content as per the new ICT standard.

Completion date: April 2025

- Perform ongoing quality-assurance exercises on all communications products.

Completion date: December 2025

- Provide training and support to communications professionals on how to create accessible documents and on the use of plain language.

Completion date: April 2024

- Raise awareness on accessibility and provide advice to employees, through internal channels (employee and supervisor newsletters), for the preparation and publishing of documentation.

Completion date: December 2024

- Develop a schedule to regularly share resources, guidance and standard practices on how to develop accessible documents and materials. Promote the information monthly through our internal channels.

Completion date: January 2024

Lead: Communications Branch

Enabler: Knowledge, Information and Technology Services Branch, Human Resources Branch

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The NRC strives to ensure that accessibility is considered in all procurement processes. It refers to the acquisition of goods and services through purchase orders and contracts. The procurement action plan includes both the process of procurement and the goods and services that are being procured.

Barrier 10: lack of knowledge on accessibility and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the procurement process.

Actions:

- Offer accessibility training to procurement officers to ensure it is considered in procurement based on Public Services and Procurement Canada guidelines.

Completion date: December 2023

- Provide accessibility guidance to employees with procurement responsibilities based on Public Services and Procurement Canada guidelines.

Completion date: December 2024

- Ensure that procurement officers identify accessibility requirements in the statement of work and evaluation criteria and carefully review requests that exclude them.

Completion date: December 2023

- Establish guidelines and expectations that consideration will be given to accessibility requirements in the purchase of goods and services, particularly when renting facilities for off-site meetings or events.

Completion date: December 2023

Barrier 11: procurement documentation is not consistently available in accessible formats.

Actions:

- Review all internal and external procurement documents for compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements.

Completion date: December 2023

- Convert inaccessible documentation beginning with external procurement documents.

Completion date: December 2024

Lead: Finance and Procurement Services Branch

Enabler: Knowledge, Information and Technology Services Branch,
Communications Branch

Design and delivery of programs and services

The NRC is committed to make every program and service it offers accessible. The initial focus of the design and delivery of programs and services will be on the Industrial Research Assistance Program. The program provides advice, connections and funding to help Canadian small and medium-sized businesses grow, increase their innovation capacity, and take ideas to market.

Barrier 12: accessibility is not fully integrated into the design and delivery of programs and services.

Actions:

- Conduct a review of programs and services across the NRC to identify barriers in design and delivery. This review will result in recommended areas of focus going forward.

Completion date: March 2024

Actions led by the Industrial Research Assistance Program:

- Review and assess all of the documentation and communication products (website, materials) against accessibility standard.

Completion date: December 2024

- Develop a pilot program to educate Industrial Research Assistance Program employees on equity, diversity and inclusion including accessibility considerations in all aspects of program policy and delivery.

Completion date: March 2023

- Contribute financial support to up to 5 client companies in the advanced manufacturing sector to hire persons with disabilities, in particular people identifying as being on the autism spectrum.

Completion date: December 2023

- The Industrial Research Assistance Program will evaluate assistive technologies such as teletypewriter (TTY) technology, chatbots, live-agent chat services, real-time text and video relay services in its call centre.

Completion date: September 2023

Lead: Industrial Research Assistance Program

Transportation

The NRC reviewed all its policies, practices, programs and services, and determined there are no barriers in the area of transportation.

Conclusion

The NRC is committed to the *Accessible Canada Act*'s goal to create a Canada without barriers in the workplace and for those accessing our programs and services by January 2040. We are also focused on developing a diverse, respectful and inclusive workplace where persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to grow and can bring different abilities to the table. This action plan brings together what we have learned through research and consultation. It distills the actions where we will focus our efforts to address the barriers that have been identified. The NRC accessibility plan will continue to evolve as we make progress over the next 3 years.

Glossary

The following definitions apply in the *Accessible Canada Act*.

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

Disability: 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.

