



Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Northern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développement  
économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario

## **The 2023-2025 Accessibility Action Plan for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario**

Canada 

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<https://fednor.ised-isde.canada.ca/site/fednor/en/accessibility-plan>

To obtain a copy of this publication, or to receive it in an alternate format (Braille, large print, etc.), please contact:

FedNor Communications  
Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario  
19 Lisgar Street  
Suite 307  
Sudbury, ON P3E 3L4  
Canada

Telephone (toll-free in Canada): 1-877-333-6673

TTY (for hearing impaired): 1-866-694-8389

Business hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Email: [fednormediarelations-relationsaveclesmediasfednor@ised-isde.gc.ca](mailto:fednormediarelations-relationsaveclesmediasfednor@ised-isde.gc.ca)

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# Message from the President

*“I was born with cerebral palsy, but it hasn't really stopped me from doing what I want to do or choosing what I want to do,” Benoit said. “Sometimes I do things a lot differently than most people, like getting dressed in the morning or physical things, but that's kind of why I go to the gym every single day to try to get better and stronger and, and more mobile, more independent.”*

- Ryan Benoit, Owner/Operator of Positive Inception, a Sudbury clothing store and winner of Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce's Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2019

I am pleased to present the first Accessibility Action Plan for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor). It marks an important milestone for our new Agency as we strive to build a workplace that is accommodating, open, diverse, inclusive, and barrier-free for everyone.

At FedNor, we invest in our employees, our communities and the development of our economy. Each of our employees and their unique abilities and needs, contributes to our success and that of our region. We work together to foster business competitiveness, innovation and productivity, to develop and diversify the economies of our local communities and to promote the strengths of Northern Ontario.

FedNor is proud to be doing its part to contribute to the federal government's commitment to building a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

Our evergreen Accessibility Action Plan, developed in collaboration with persons with disabilities, outlines the concrete steps we will take to achieve greater accessibility over the next three years. These steps are just the first in a series of measures that we will undertake as part of our commitment to continual growth and improvement.

We recognize that our work has only just begun and that this Accessibility Action Plan will evolve over time. We will continue to listen to, and learn from, our workforce and clients with disabilities and their unique lived experience. We will assess our progress throughout the year and will adjust our action plan as needed in our effort to achieve greater accessibility, safety and belonging for employees and clients.

I invite you to read the Accessibility Action Plan to learn about FedNor's commitments to employees and the clients we serve across Northern Ontario. We welcome your feedback on this plan and our yearly progress reports as we continue on our journey together towards a barrier-free Canada.

Wela'lin, thank you.

Valerie Gideon - President, FedNor

## Overview of the Public Service of Canada Accessibility Strategy

The federal government is committed to building a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

Today, we continue to see many obstacles and barriers in the workplace that prevent persons with disabilities from working and achieving their full potential in the Public Service of Canada. We build a better Canada by receiving the expertise and knowledge of those living with disabilities to develop concrete and impactful solutions.

The [Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy](#) sets out how to identify, prevent and remove physical, systemic and cultural obstacles to the participation of persons with disabilities. When persons with disabilities in the public service can focus on their work and their service to Canadians, everyone benefits.

The [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#), which came into force in July 2019, is intended to:

- Enforce the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers for organizations under federal jurisdiction; and
- Ensure the full participation in society of persons with physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairments.

### Summary of FedNor's Accessibility Action Plan

Persons with disabilities deal with daily barriers to physical accessibility, but also to technology, employment, communication, program and service delivery and design, procurement of goods, and transportation. To remove these barriers, FedNor is committed to developing and implementing an Accessibility Action Plan to improve accessibility across all its services and facilities.

FedNor's Accessibility Action Plan is an important step towards achieving a more inclusive and accessible Canada for all Canadians. FedNor is determined to work closely with persons with disabilities, stakeholders and civil society organizations to implement this plan and achieve this important goal.

FedNor employees with disabilities, those that have a family member with a disability or have an interest in improving workplace accessibility, shared their experience and provided feedback through an anonymous questionnaire. Through this initial feedback, we concluded that there are obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from working and thriving within FedNor. Main themes identified through the feedback questionnaire related to the physical environment of FedNor offices, access to accommodation, and tools and technology provided for persons with disabilities to complete their work effectively.

## **FedNor's Obligations Under the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)***

Under the ACA, all regulated entities, such as FedNor, have the following duties:

Accessibility plan: An accessibility plan must be created in consultation with people with disabilities. The plan must outline the strategies for improving and meeting legal accessibility duties. These plans would have to be published publicly and updated every three years or sooner.

Feedback tools: A system must be implemented so that employee and/or client feedback can be received regarding accessibility at FedNor. This form is available at all times for future contributions on the FedNor site and on FedNor's intranet "Borealis" for employees.

Progress reports: Reports outlining how accessibility plans will be/are being fulfilled must be created in consultation with people with disabilities and describe how they will address the main concerns of feedback received.

To give your view on obstacles to accessibility and the first version of FedNor's Accessibility Action Plan or to participate in the Plan's development or its actions, please contact FedNor in one of the following ways:

### **[Email](#)**

#### **Mail:**

19 Lisgar Street, Suite 307  
Sudbury, ON  
P3E 3L4

**Telephone (toll-free in Canada):** 1-877-333-6673

**TTY (for hearing impaired):** 1-866-694-8389

## **FedNor’s Accessibility Action Plan**

The following section provides an overview of how FedNor plans to address the Government of Canada’s Accessibility Strategy and its goals, and where the Agency expects to be with respect to these goals in 2023-2024.

### **Guiding Principles**

The following principles will guide the implementation of FedNor’s Action Plan:

- Persons with disabilities must be involved in the design and implementation of FedNor’s accessibility action plan, as recognized by the Public Service of Canada “Nothing Without Us” strategy.
- FedNor is working in collaboration with other departments and agencies, bargaining units and other public, private and non-profit organizations to ensure a barrier-free and inclusive workplace for Canadians.
- FedNor is giving priority to measures that will have a lasting impact.
- FedNor’s strategy for better accessibility is transparent. It will demonstrate, in an open and transparent manner, the various efforts made to eliminate obstacles for persons with disabilities.

### **Goals**

Seven objectives determined by the [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#), will guide FedNor’s Accessibility Action Plan:

1. Employment – Improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities;
2. Built environment – Enhance accessibility within physical spaces;
3. Technology – Make information and communications technology usable by all;
4. Communication – Make content, whether printed or published on digital platforms, and distribute communication items that are accessible to and inclusive of everyone;
5. Services – Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services;
6. Procurement of goods, services and facilities; and,
7. Transportation.

## Objectives

The goals identified in the Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy are presented as seven key objectives. These objectives were identified in consultation through employees' feedback, FedNor's Inclusion and Diversity Champion, and FedNor's Accessibility working committee.

### Objective 1 – Employment

This area of action includes workplace-specific aspects, such as hiring interviews, training, performance evaluations and requests for accommodation. Examples of obstacles in this area include job offers that are not formatted for use by assistive technologies like screen readers, the assumption that a person cannot do certain types of work due to his or her disability or imposing job restrictions that do not recognize systemic barriers to access to higher education or specific experience and knowledge.

#### Obstacles identified

- Respondents indicated that they found the processes for requesting workplace accommodation difficult. They do not enable persons with disabilities to enter their accommodation needs and they were obliged to discuss their accommodation needs all over again with their new managers if they changed departments or positions.
- FedNor would benefit from an increase representation of people with disabilities.
- FedNor's hiring processes are complicated, cumbersome, and lengthy which could be deterring its ability to recruit great candidates.

#### Actions

FedNor will focus on:

- Adopting an "Accessibility Passport" that enables persons with disabilities to enter their accommodation needs and not have to make another request when they change positions within FedNor or within the Public Service.
- Implementing mandatory training on diversity, equity and inclusion (training would include but not limited to bias, exclusion and how to accommodate individuals within their teams).
- Soliciting feedback from staffing processes on FedNor's process including the identification of any barriers.
- Implementing targeted hiring processes for persons with disabilities.

#### Results and timelines

- Training will be provided to all managers on their roles and responsibilities in response to accommodation starting in January of 2024.

In addition, FedNor employees and the public will see that:

- The Inclusion and Diversity Champion will provide visible and sustained leadership and help maintain a dynamic network of employees with disabilities,



as well as promote communications around the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3.

- Informal Conflict Management Services (ICMS) promote respect and inclusion in the workplace through available services.
- All managers have completed the mandatory training.
- Employees will be informed of the existence of the “Accessibility Passport” and how to utilize it.
- Computer equipment and furniture that result from an accommodation follow employees from one job to the other in FedNor so that they don’t have to start the process all over each time.
- Basic ergonomic principles are applied to a healthy population as an injury prevention measure.
- FedNor will have a more inclusive and diverse workforce.
- FedNor’s staffing processes will be streamlined and improved.

## **Objective 2 – Built Environment**

This area of action includes the physical spaces that people use, namely offices, workstations, and common areas.

### Obstacles identified

- Persons with disabilities have reported challenges in the workplace, such as elevators that do not work effectively, a lack of space in the offices for mobility devices, blind spots around corners, and mediocre signage.
- Respondents noted that the physical workspace does not take account of non-visible disabilities, such as environmental hypersensitivities, chronic pain, anxiety and autism.

### Actions

To eliminate these barriers, FedNor will:

- Develop and put into practice a Disabilities Considerations Checklist of 5–10 items to make the physical workspace more accessible for all: signage (including pictograms); office space, noise cancelling headsets are available to all staff to help mitigate noise and distractions.
- Have clear and visible evacuation plans that indicate how to safely evacuate an employee or visitor with a disability. Regular practice, with persons with disabilities in various locations, should be carried out to ensure safety during emergencies.
- FedNor has completed an accessibility audit within all its workspaces and has identified numerous areas requiring improvements to make the space completely accessible. Areas identified include adding accessible push buttons to common entry points and meetings rooms; lowering counter height in kitchenettes, and enlarging hall space between workspace cubicles to ensure proper accessibility to people with disabilities. These improvements will be implemented in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

### Results and timeline

- Often, building codes are not enough to meet the actual needs of persons with disabilities. Starting in 2023, employees will be consulted on how best to make their workplaces more accessible while taking into account feedback from persons with disabilities, whether employees, clients or any other person who uses FedNor offices.
- Emergency evacuations plans will adopt measures to ensure the safety and security of all employees are addressed and fully implemented.
- FedNor offices, workstations and common areas will be fully accessible.

### **Objective 3 – Technology**

This area of action includes the technologies that organizations use to communicate with their employees and the public, broadcasting and telecommunications. At FedNor, technologies include websites, emails, text messages and computer programs. Telecommunications include telephony and Internet services.

### Obstacles identified

- Employees with disabilities have identified barriers to gaining access to the electronic tools and software that they need to do their work.

### Actions

FedNor will:

- Provide tools that are adapted to employees who need them in order to do their best work possible. Additional need-adapted tools must be provided quickly and to the extent possible.
- Select a dedicated person in the Agency who is familiar with Accessibility, Accommodations and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) in order to make managers and employees aware of the services and availability of AAACT from Shared Services Canada.
- Ensure that all platforms are accessible to all users.
- Use the “Accessibility Passport,” to ensure that accommodations accompany the employee when moving from one position to another in the Agency, and ensure that all Agency employees have the essential equipment they need, for example, two monitors are provided to assist people with visual impairments.
- Provide resources (e.g., training) to employees so that they can create accessible documents with common tools (e.g., Word, PowerPoint).
- Enable accessibility features on all devices/software.
- Convert all models into accessible formats by late 2023.

### Results and timelines

Starting in 2023, employees and the public will be able to see that barriers are being addressed through the development of an information technology accessibility strategy that focuses on:

- Education, awareness and communication;
- Accessibility governance and accountability;

- Accessible procurement;
- Compliance with and assessment of accessibility standards and directives;
- Enhancing service delivery to employees with disabilities;
- Ensuring that all major new systems, both internal and external, launched as of 2023 are accessible;
- Review the onboarding process including the accessibility needs;
- Inform employees of guidelines, features and best practices when developing and reviewing documents (e.g. awareness campaign).

## **Objective 4 – Communication**

This area of action includes the means that people use to give, receive and understand information. People communicate in various ways, including speech, writing, sign languages, images, body language and communication assistants. It is important that everyone is able to understand the information that is shared and have access to information in formats that suit them. To do this, alternative texts for images should be provided, along with clear formatting to facilitate comprehension of content and large font sizes. The use of sign languages, communication assistants and sign language interpreters also helps to make communications accessible to all. The ACA recognizes American Sign Language (ASL), the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) and Indigenous sign languages as being the main languages for persons in Canada who are hard of hearing.

### Obstacles identified

- Web pages and documents are not fully accessible.
- Further communication on accessibility awareness could help reduce barriers in the workplace.

### Actions

- FedNor will ensure that its intranet and website is completely accessible.
- FedNor will provide training and guidelines to staff on how to ensure presentations and documents are fully accessible.
- FedNor will promote National Accessibility Week each fiscal year, to further champion and promote accessibility awareness.

### Results and timelines

Starting in 2023, employees and the public will be able to see that these barriers are being addressed through:

- A fully accessible and barrier-free website and intranet.
- Employees will have received training and guidance on how to make their documents and presentations accessible.
- National Accessibility Week will be promoted to further highlight FedNor's commitment to ensuring an accessible and barrier-free workplace.

## **Objective 5 – Program and service design and delivery**

This area focuses on how the organization designs and delivers programs and services to its clients.

### Obstacles identified

- More feedback could be solicited from FedNor stakeholders and recipients to help identify barriers and solutions to accessibility.
- More inclusivity to accessibility barriers and considerations could be included in the development of new FedNor programs and initiatives.
- Accessibility needs to be included in FedNor's new grants and contributions program management (GCPM) portal expected to be launched in May of 2023. GCPM will serve as an external facing portal for clients to apply and submit their application/information electronically to FedNor.

### Actions

- FedNor will solicit feedback from its clients and stakeholders on possible barriers they may encounter when dealing with FedNor and its services.
- In the development of new initiatives and programs, FedNor will consider barriers to accessibility utilizing key metrics through gender-based analysis plus (GBA+).
- A user interaction and user experience technical expert will help guide the new GCPM portal team to ensure it is fully accessible and barrier-free to persons with disabilities.

### Results and timelines

Throughout the 2023-24 fiscal year, FedNor services and tools to the public will be fully accessible.

## **Objective 6 – Procurement of goods, services and facilities**

This area of action includes the purchase and rental of goods, services and places.

### Obstacles identified

- No notable obstacles were identified at this time as FedNor has been contracting out its contracting and procurement services to its former department until it hires its own personnel.

### Actions

- Upon the hiring of procurement staff anticipated by mid-2023, FedNor will ensure it takes into consideration any barriers to accessibility while procuring goods and services.
- Ensure that contracts with suppliers meet accessibility requirements.

### Results and timelines

- By 2024, FedNor's procurement of goods and services will be fully accessible.

## **Objective 7 – Transportation**

Transportation includes travel between provinces or outside of Canada by air, train, bus or ferry. It also includes vehicles used by federally regulated organizations.

### Obstacles identified

No obstacles were identified. This item will be reviewed on a regular basis to assess any barriers to accessibility.

### **Next Steps**

FedNor's Accessibility Action Plan is an evergreen document and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to demonstrate progress, build upon strengths, and implement improvements as needed in addressing and removing barriers in the workplace. We are committed to continuing engagement, evolving as we listen, learn, and build on successful practices from one another, other departments, and our internal and external partners. The feedback questionnaire process is always open and we encourage persons with disabilities to share their experience and offer solutions to provide an accessible and inclusive workplace for public servants and Canadians and achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

## Appendix – Glossary

**Disability** is a complex, evolving matter. The term covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. It may be physical, mental, psychiatric, social or economic. Here are some disability sub-categorizations:

1. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness.
2. A short-term physical impairment caused by an accident, such as a broken arm or a concussion.
3. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental or learning disability (such as ADHD or autism).
4. A mental health condition, whether short-term, episodic or chronic, such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder.

**Accessibility** means that people with and without disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with information, services and applications.

**Accommodation** is a necessary measure taken to enable an employee to work to the best of his or her ability.

**Barriers** may be attitudinal, environmental or institutional. They may even be internalized.