Federal Economic Development
Agency for Northern Ontario

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

2023 Annual Progress Report on Accessibility at the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario

Canada

2023 Annual Report on Accessibility at the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario

Reporting period: January 1, 2023 to December 1, 2023

Information gathered as of: December 1, 2023

Introduction   Since becoming a standalone agency in August of 2021, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor) has maintained in high regard the importance of an open, diverse, inclusive, accommodating and barrier-free workplace. Investing in staffing, our communities and the development of our economy have been key elements for the agency in attaining its goals. In March 2023, FedNor proudly introduced the inaugural [2023 to 2025 Accessibility Action Plan for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario](). The plan describes the department's accessibility practices and programs in relation to identifying, removing and preventing barriers. By identifying, removing and preventing barriers, FedNor can be accessible and barrier-free for everyone. Goals were outlined addressing each guiding principle set out under the [Accessible Canada Act (ACA)]() covering the three-year period. In total, there are seven overarching goals to achieve over the next three years. This document is the first annual report pertaining to the progress made regarding accessibility at FedNor. This report contains the list of goals to achieve from 2023 to 2025 for each guiding principle and their current progress status. The plan is measured in a calendar year (not fiscal year) so statistics and goal-related information are reported on that basis. Given the 2023 to 2025 FedNor Accessibility Action Plan is an evergreen document, the reader may notice slight changes in the wording of certain goals. This was done to clearly define the goal or to add additional context to the objective. In certain cases, goals were combined due to their context. The reader may also note the omission of certain goals which were repeated in different sections of the report to avoid redundancy. All sectors of FedNor were consulted and provided feedback in the preparation of this report.

Should you have any questions or feedback pertaining to this report, please contact [fednoraccessibilityfeedback-retroactionaccessibilitefednor@FedNor.gc.ca]()

Accessibility – Borealis (FedNor intranet – internal to FedNor staff) page hits

This table indicates the number of visits to FedNor accessibility-related pages on Borealis from January 1, 2023 until November 17, 2023.

Intranet (Borealis) pages	January to November 17, 2023
1. Accessibility Feedback Form (Bilingual page - English and French)	120
2a. Accessibility Feedback Process (English)	56
2b. Processus de rétroaction sur l'accessibilité (French)	19
3a. National Accessibility Week message (English)	16
3b. Message sur la Semaine nationale de l'accessibilité (French)	18
4a. Message from the President – Amendments to Public Service Employment Act that promoted the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service (English)	50
4b. Message de la présidente – Modifications à la LEFP favorisant la Stratégie d'accessibilité pour la fonction publique (French)	8

Accessibility – FedNor website page hits

This table indicates the number of visits to FedNor accessibility-related pages on the FedNor website during 2023.

External website	January to November 17 (English)	January to November 17 (French)	Total
Accessibility at FedNor	143	21	164
2023 to 2025 FedNor Accessibility Action Plan	128	56	184
PDF Version	0	0	0
Accessibility feedback process	74	10	84
Accessibility feedback form	82	63	145

FedNor at a glance: who we are

General information pertaining to FedNor staff.

Total # of respondents in our system	Female %	Male %
73	85	15

Total % of respondents who completed the Employment Equity Questionnaire	% identified as a visible minority	% identified as Métis	% identified as having a disability
64	2	6	11

FedNor accessibility feedback panel consultations

A FedNor accessibility feedback panel consultation session occurred on May 30, 2023 to discuss how we can make FedNor more accessible and inclusive. The event featured a presentation entitled, *What we Learned*, which detailed the feedback received as FedNor developed the 2023 to 2025 FedNor Accessibility Action Plan.

Status of objectives

Employment

Goals for 2023 - 2025	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 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.	• FedNor has contacted TBS Accessibility Passport and has completed all documentation to register FedNor as an Official Adopter Organization of the Workplace Accessibility Passport. • Employees will be informed of the existence of the Accessibility Passport during the onboarding process. Staff awareness will be promoted via the communications department ensuring accessibility to all staff. • Computer equipment and furniture resulting from an accommodation will follow employees from one job to the other in FedNor so 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. Ergonomic information sessions and training will be available to all staff when available. • Information pertaining to ergonomic office desk and chair set up is accessible to all on the FedNor intranet site, Borealis.	Completed Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Completed

Goal 2
Implementing mandatory training on diversity, equity and inclusion including, but not limited to: bias, exclusion and how to accommodate individuals within their teams.
	• Mandatory training checklist ~~set~~ in onboarding document includes the following training for all staff available through the Canada School of Public Service:
	    ○ *Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)* (INC102)
	    ○ *Moving from Bias to Inclusion* (INC123)
	    ○ *Adopting an Inclusive Mindset at Work* (INC122)
		Completed

	• Mandatory training for managers also includes the following training: *Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce* (COR 120). Managers who have not completed the training will be enrolled in the training by January 4 with the goal to have this training completed by all managers by March 31, 2024.	Ongoing
	• FedNor will be incorporating the new Canada School of Public Service online course, *Addressing Disability, Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility* (INC115), a two-hour online course, as part of FedNor's mandatory training for all staff and adding it to the onboarding process.	Ongoing
	• All staff will be required to complete this training by June 30, 2024.	Ongoing
Goal 3 Soliciting feedback from staffing processes at FedNor including the identification of any barriers.	• For unsuccessful internal candidates involved in a staffing process, a feedback session is offered with one or more of the board members as standard practice. Any identification or perceived barriers are discussed during these sessions and noted for future reference.	Ongoing
Goal 4 Implementing targeted hiring processes for persons with disabilities.	• Prior to the onset of the selection process, board members are reminded of the importance of inclusivity and accessibility as a means of expanding the current staffing model. • All staff participating as a board member for a staffing process will be required to complete the *Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce* (COR120) offered by CSPS.	Ongoing Ongoing

Built environment

Goals for 2023 to 2025	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 Develop and put into practice a disabilities considerations checklist of 5 to 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.	• The Corporate Facilities Directorate is continually requesting confirmation of timing and monitoring for updates from the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) regarding the new Federal Identify Program (FIP) signage standards. TBS's last update in spring 2023 noted the updated signage standard will include the new accessibility requirements and will be developed by Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) over the next year or more. The ASC Technical Committee tasked with the development has begun its work. At this time, the status quo remains for signage. As this goal is a priority for the Corporate Facilities Directorate, this goal will remain within the action plan and transferred to a later year to complete once the updated standards are issued for the Government of Canada./ • Noise cancelling headsets are available to all staff. These headsets are assigned directly to the staff member for ease of use and reference.	Deferred until standard is updated Completed
Goal 2 Have clear and visible evacuation plans that indicate how to safely evacuate an employee or visitor with a disability. Regular practice should be conducted with persons with disabilities in various locations to ensure safety during emergencies.	• FedNor's Building Evacuation Emergency Plan (BEEP) and/or Building Fire Plans include provisions pertaining to various measures to ensure an inclusive environment. Clear and visible evacuation plans are located at entrances/exits and a "buddy system" process for those with disabilities is also noted in the BEEP. There is also a section for those with certain disabilities that require additional assistance in the case of an emergency and measures specific to that individual highlighted in the BEEPs for FedNor offices. All sites are equipped with auditory and visual fire alarms. All sites have evacuation plans readily available for access in designated locations in the offices.	Ongoing
Goal 3 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 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.	• As of November 17, 2023, contractors have been secured for the North Bay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay offices to have the physical accessibility issues addressed including the installation of push buttons, enlarging hall spaces, etc. It is anticipated this work will begin in the near future with the goal to have the work completed by April 1, 2024. • The Kenora office audit has occurred and scope of work created; however, no contractor has been secured to date. • FedNor Sault Ste. Marie office is in a shared space with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and thus falls under the umbrella of ISED responsibility as the major tenant. • No upgrades required to the FedNor Timmins office.	Ongoing Ongoing Deferred to ISED No action required.

Technology

Note: Goal #4 -- Use the Accessibility Passport, to ensure that accommodations accompany the employee when moving from one position to another in the Agency is addressed in Employment section (Goal #1). Goal #5 -- Provide resources (e.g., training) to employees so that they can create accessible documents with common tools (e.g., Word, PowerPoint) addressed in Goal #2 and Goal #3 of this section.

Goals for 2023 to 2025	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 Provide tools to employees who need them to do their best work possible. Ensure FedNor is agile with accessibility requests and ready to support staff.	• FedNor Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) has communicated with the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) Network to ensure we are in a position to support staff when needed. • Approved software and hardware are readily available through our partners which are designed to address specific needs.	Completed/Ongoing
Goal 2 Select a dedicated person in the agency who is familiar with Accessibility, Accommodations and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) to make managers and employees aware of the services and availability of AAACT from Shared Services Canada.	• FedNor IM\IT is the lead contact for AAACT and has communicated with AAACT Network to see what is available for organizations. **Timeline\Next steps** • Offer support to employees through training, workshops, skills development, mentoring, or sessions on topics such as creating accessible digital content and documents through AAACT by the end of 2024. • Provide guidance on how and where to receive services and post on the intranet by the end of 2024.	Completed Ongoing
Goal 3 Ensure all platforms are accessible to all users.	• Created an accessibility verification tool for employees when creating content to ensure all new content is accessible. • Created a guide to run accessible meetings • Guides for IM content revised for accessibility considerations. • The onboarding process is currently under review with accessibility being a focal point **Timeline\Next steps** • Post guides and tools on the intranet (Borealis) and make them available for all FedNor staff by mid 2024 • CSPS Course identified and link to be posted for staff on intranet.	In progress Ongoing Ongoing

Goal 4 Enable accessibility features on all devices/software.	• Enable accessibility features on M365 applications • Mobile device accessibility settings enabled • The M365 suite of applications now has accessibility features enabled as of 2023. Mobile devices such as iPhone and Samsung have always had accessibility features enabled.	Completed Completed
Goal 5 Convert all FedNor-led applications into accessible formats by late 2023.	• All new FedNor applications are being created in an accessible format. • FedNor's recently built internal booking application is fully accessible. **Results** • Education, awareness documents, and information have been created and are now in the process of being communicated to staff. • Accessible procurement awareness and aids are available from AAACT, procurement officers are encouraged to communicate directly with the network to achieve results. FedNor does not currently have a procurement team but has a service level agreement with ISED as an interim measure. • Enhanced service delivery options are in place, although FedNor hasn't had to utilize them.	Ongoing Completed

Communications

Goals for 2023	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 FedNor will ensure its intranet and website are completely accessible.	• External website: Content on the FedNor website is both accessible and barrier-free, using proper coding and meeting the WCAG 2.0 conformance requirements as identified under the Standard on Web Accessibility. This includes the use of alternative text for photos on the website. If web content is not fully accessible due to technology limitations or other reasons, alternative versions of the item are available upon request. • Intranet (Borealis): In 2023, FedNor introduced its redesigned intranet site Borealis, which is now hosted on SharePoint. All recent postings include alternative text for images provided and feature clear formatting using large fonts and high-contrast elements. Previously developed content is being reviewed to ensure compliance and will be made accessible by the end of the 2023 fiscal year (March 31, 2024).	Completed

Goal 2		
Goal 2 FedNor will provide training and guidelines to staff on how to ensure presentations and documents are fully accessible.	• FedNor's Communications team has been working closely with the Policy unit to ensure all public reports being developed for the agency are formatted properly and that they are posted on the FedNor website in a fully accessible format. • Accessibility awareness training is being developed and will be held in 2024 for all staff to ensure documents and presentations are being developed in an accessible manner for internal and external audiences. • Templates using FedNor's new look and feel are being developed with accessibility as a key consideration – they include font types and sizes that consider the needs of visually impaired users for example. These templates are for presentations, reports and more. Guidance will be provided to all staff on use by December 31, 2023.	Ongoing
Goal 3 FedNor will promote National AccessAbility Week each fiscal year to further champion and promote accessibility awareness.	• A message was posted on May 26, 2023, promoting National AccessAbility Week to all staff, which highlighted FedNor's first Accessibility Action Plan. • A session was held on May 30, 2023, to discuss how we can make FedNor more accessible and inclusive. The event featured a presentation entitled, *What we Learned*, which detailed the feedback received as FedNor developed the 2023 to 2025 FedNor Accessibility Action Plan. The event included an open discussion with FedNor's Champion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Jill Thayer, and the Director of Human Resources.	Completed/Ongoing

Program and service design and delivery

Goals for 2023	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 FedNor will solicit feedback from its clients and stakeholders on possible barriers they may be encountering when dealing with FedNor and its services.	• To increase outreach to Indigenous recipients through project monitoring and administration activities, FedNor developed and posed a set of questions that were targeted towards Indigenous stakeholders to solicit feedback on their client experiences provided through the Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP). Data was collected over a period of several months and reported on to management. • As part of its client-centric approach, FedNor also invited feedback on the various stages of the lifecycle of the NODP application process through focus group discussions of both Indigenous and visible minority groups. This effort also included a session with Northern Ontario's three Indigenous-led Community Futures Development Cooperations. Feedback was shared with management and has informed prioritized improvements of the application process, including through the development and implementation of new digital and streamlined program management tools.	Ongoing

Goal 2	• A GBA+ approach was applied throughout the aforementioned engagement processes outlined above to help ensure that barriers to participation for Indigenous and visible minority groups were considered and better addressed.	Ongoing
In the development of new initiatives and programs, FedNor will consider barriers to accessibility utilizing key metrics through Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+).	• During 2023, FedNor co-developed the Tourism Growth Program with Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada and the other regional development agencies. FedNor played a significant role in the completion of the GBA+ analysis for the Treasury Board Submission, reviewing drafts and providing input and recommended revisions. Also during 2023, FedNor submitted two proposals for Budget 2024 consideration. GBA+ analyses that considered barriers to accessibility utilizing key metrics were completed for both proposals.	
Goal 3	• A user interaction and user experience technical expert was engaged at the onset of the project to ensure accessibility measures and guidelines were incorporated into the solution's design.	Ongoing
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.		

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Goals for 2023	Updates to achieving the goal	Status (Update)
Goal 1 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.	• FedNor continues to search for procurement staff and thus this goal cannot be attained until staff is in place.	Ongoing
Goal 2 Ensure that contracts with suppliers meet accessibility requirements.	• Currently, FedNor utilizes services from another federal government department for all contracts with suppliers until procurement staff is in place.	Ongoing

Transportation

Goals for 2023	Updates to achieving the goal	Status
Goal 1 No obstacles identified.	N/A	N/A