Department of Finance Canada
Canada

Ministère des Finances
Canada

Department of Finance Canada
Accessibility Action Plan 2022-25

Canada

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Foreword

Message from the Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister

The Department of Finance Canada is fully committed to implementing the Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada. For too long, there have been barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from working and thriving in Canada's public service. A better, more accessible public service can only be built by ensuring that the knowledge and expertise of persons with disabilities are included in all aspects of our work.

With the goal of building a barrier-free organization, we are very proud to present our first Accessibility Action Plan. The Action Plan lays out the specific actions we will take to achieve progress towards realizing the Government of Canada's vision to be the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world. The Plan anchors the strategy in our daily work and continues the important organizational dialogue on barriers to inclusion for all employees. For example, the Plan identifies immediate and longer-term actions to improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities, enhance the accessibility of our built environment, make information and communications technology usable by all, equip our staff to design and deliver accessible programs and services, and build an accessibility-confident organization.

The Action Plan is an ambitious start. We recognize that we cannot undertake all actions at once and we are prioritizing the activities we need to move forward immediately so employees see tangible progress.

As the Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister of Finance Canada, we take great pride in the work that is done in the Department. We, along with the rest of our senior management team, are committed to prioritizing accessibility in our daily work. Collectively, we must work to ensure our organization's culture empowers all employees to achieve their full potential and contributes to a fully accessible future where barriers to inclusion are identified, removed and prevented.

Michael Sabia
Deputy Minister

Nick Leswick
Associate Deputy Minister

Introduction

The [Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) provides a vision and framework for how the public service can identify, prevent and remove physical, systemic and cultural obstacles to the participation of persons with disabilities. Its aim is to create the most accessible public service in the world – an environment where persons with disabilities can flourish. When persons with disabilities in the public service can focus on their work and their service to Canadians, instead of combatting the systems and structures that keep them marginalized, all Canadians can benefit.

The strategy was developed following the passage of the *[Accessible Canada Act](#)* (the Act), which received Royal Assent in July 2019, and sets expectations for the achievement of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. It seeks to:

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

The Act requires all regulated entities, including federal organizations such as the Department of Finance Canada, to:

- Develop and publish an accessibility action plan. The plan needs to be created in consultation with people with disabilities. The plan must outline the strategies for improving and meeting legal accessibility duties. These plans are to be published publicly and updated every three years or sooner;
- Implement a process to receive and respond to feedback on accessibility and on the plan itself in a timely manner; and
- Publish annual progress reports in consultation with people with disabilities to communicate progress made against the plan and address feedback received.

The Department of Finance Canada at a glance

The Department of Finance Canada has close to 900 employees. The Department is responsible for the overall stewardship of the Canadian economy, helps the Government of Canada develop and implement strong and sustainable economic, fiscal, tax, social, security, international and financial sector policies and programs that reflect Canadian values, and ensures that the federal government is supported by high quality advice. A deep-seated connection exists between the Department and work on accessibility. In fulfilling its requirements under the *[Accessible Canada Act](#)*, the Department has the opportunity to implement meaningful change and deliver on its strategic outcomes.

Executive summary and commitment statement

The Department of Finance Canada developed its first Accessibility Action Plan as an important first step towards realizing the *Accessible Canada Act*'s commitment to creating a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

The Department is committed to proactively eliminating and preventing barriers faced by persons with disabilities and ensuring greater opportunities for all. This Plan provides a strong foundation for the work that lies ahead to make the organization inclusive by design and accessible by default.

The Department's Plan identifies barriers to accessibility in six key areas identified under the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- Employment;
- Built Environment;
- Information and communication technologies (ICT);
- Communications other than ICT;
- Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods; and
- Culture.

The commitments and activities related to the "design and delivery of programs and services" key area are reflected under other key areas identified for the Department.

Given the nature of the Department's mandate and operations, the Act's recommended transportation pillar is not applicable.

The Plan also identifies the barriers chosen as priorities for action over the next three years and outlines the actions proposed to address these barriers over the course of this Plan and beyond. As a strategic plan is only as good as its implementation and delivery, the Department will prioritize the commitments and develop an implementation and delivery plan with clear timelines and accountabilities for each of the six key areas.

Additionally, the Department is currently implementing two overarching enabling activities that will provide the foundational framework required to improve accessibility:

- Government of Canada (GC) Workplace Accessibility Passport
- The Workplace Accommodation Centre

GC Workplace Accessibility Passport

The Department was an early adopter of the passport and continues to promote its use to managers and employees. The passport helps address obstacles that federal public service employees and applicants with disabilities face in obtaining the tools and supports needed to perform at their best and succeed in the workplace. This tool was designed to travel with the employees throughout their federal public service career, reducing the need to renegotiate workplace supports when employees change jobs.

The Workplace Accommodation Centre

This Workplace Accommodation Centre is a collaborative pilot program between the Department and the Treasury Board Secretariat. The Centre is implementing a centralized and neutral case management model for requests for accommodations that will provide services to all employees who request an accommodation, and not exclusively employees who have self-identified as a person with a disability. The approach is expected to:

- Streamline workplace accommodation practices;
- Improve employees' experiences;
- Facilitate the accommodation process for managers;
- Make expert guidance on accessibility readily available; and
- Support a "yes by default" culture.

Guiding principles

The following guiding principles will be used to ensure the Department achieves its objectives:

- Nothing without us: persons with disabilities are involved in the design and implementation of the strategy;
- Collaboration: departments and agencies work in collaboration with each other, with bargaining agents, and with other public, private and not-for-profit organizations;
- Sustainability: the strategy prioritizes actions that will have an enduring impact; and
- Transparency: the strategy is developed and implemented transparently, and departments and agencies will report openly and transparently on their efforts to remove barriers.

General

Departmental feedback process

A feedback process is in place at the Department of Finance Canada. Individuals can submit feedback relating to accessibility and its Accessibility Action Plan through various channels, including email, phone and mail. Feedback can either be provided with an identified contact or anonymously. Acknowledgement receipt and responses will only be provided if contact information is provided.

Receipt of acknowledgement of feedback will be provided within two weeks of its successful delivery to the designated organizational contact and will be provided by the same channel in which the feedback was received. Please note that anonymous feedback submissions will be treated equally to those submitted by an identified person.

All feedback will be taken into consideration during the publication of annual progress reports on the implementation of this Plan and in the renewal of the Plan.

Feedback contact

Director, Diversity and Inclusion
Email address: accessibility.accessibilite@fin.gc.ca
Phone number: 1-833-712-2292, TTY: 613-369-3230
Mailing address: 90 Elgin Street, room 10-108, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E1

Other formats

Contact us to request alternate formats of this Plan such as large print, braille, or audio.

Consultations

A co-development model inspired the approach for drafting the Plan. The Finance Accessibility Network, formed in 2022, facilitated experience-based conversations, and was provided the opportunity to comment throughout the development.

Additionally, the Department's Accessibility Action Plan was informed by a broad range of feedback and input. These include:

- Discussions with accessibility pillar leads;
- An internal accessibility survey;
- Collaboration with other federal departments; and
- Consultations with external subject matter advisors.

The Department will continue to consult with the Finance Accessibility Network and will ensure that persons with disabilities contribute to all decision-making related to the commitments made in this Plan. Progress reports and future action plans will be guided by the principle of 'Nothing Without Us', recognizing that persons with disabilities will guide efforts to build an inclusive federal public service that is more innovative, efficient and productive.

What we heard

The consultations leading up to the publication of the Accessibility Action Plan focused on listening to accounts of personal experience. In listening to these messages, some common themes emerged over time:

- Centralize tools, information, and resources;
- Educate and raise awareness on accessibility inclusion;
- Foster a culture of accessibility;
- Reduce delays in equipping persons with disabilities with the tools they require to do their work;
- Ensure that persons with disabilities are involved in decision-making regarding accessibility moving forward; and
- Leverage governance committees to advocate for disability and accessibility inclusion.

Detailed action plan – accessibility pillars

Employment

Objective

Job seekers and current employees with disabilities see the Department of Finance Canada as an employer of choice and can contribute at their full potential through access to employment opportunities and career advancement in a hybrid workplace.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Put accommodation measures in place more promptly;
- Simplify documentation requirements (medical reports and specialist opinions);
- Avoid having to repeat the accommodation process with every change in position;
- Reduce obstacles for accommodation requests;
- Ensure selection processes and assessment tools are created with accessibility needs in mind at the onset;
- Encourage and promote from within the Department through the use of talent management plans and mentoring;
- Increase awareness of disability inclusion policies to make sure everyone has the same opportunities for advancement; and
- Provide additional assistance in preparing for promotions.

Short-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Design and implement recruiting and talent strategies to hire, develop and retain more persons with disabilities (and close the representation gap).
- Implement a departmental mentorship program focused on supporting equity groups.
- Revise current accessibility processes to eliminate barriers to access and align them with accessibility standards (including but not limited to the 'Tell Us Once' principal).

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Identify and communicate departmental and cross-government training and awareness programs related to disability inclusion and accessibility to all employees (e.g., formal training, speaker sessions) to raise awareness and combat unconscious bias.
- Review organizational policies and processes, including recruitment and onboarding, with a pan-disability lens to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming workplace for persons with disabilities.

Built environment

Objective

Clients and employees of the Department, including those with disabilities, can make best use of its facilities through barrier-free access.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure ramps are in place at ground-level access points and regular maintenance occurs in all seasons.
- Halls, doorways, and security gates must be wide enough to pass through in a wheelchair, with room for work materials and other assistive devices.
- Elevator doors must allow time for people with restricted mobility and low vision to enter and exit.
- Automatic door openers need to be in place and maintained, with temporary solutions in place when out of order.
- Temporary circulation routes that are put in place due to maintenance or construction must take accessibility into account.
- Ensure qualitative and experiential elements of a healthy workplace such as lighting, noise levels and decor are in place.
- Designated accessibility-friendly space and seating room should exist in gathering and meeting spaces, especially for large scale events.
- Motion detection-based automatic lighting systems cause painful interference with hearing aids.
- Furnishings with static positioning only fit certain people, so adjustable furniture is preferable.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Create a standard accessibility checklist to monitor and evaluate the accessibility of workspaces on an ongoing basis. Include a strategy to integrate this checklist into existing accommodation processes with a clear roadmap for delivery of these services.
- Develop an approved product catalogue that is regularly updated with new office furniture, fixtures and component product upgrades and adaptations. Include an accessible delivery plan for these accommodations.
- Communicate availability of Automatic Door Operators key card programming.

Longer-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Review emergency procedures for accessibility and include alternative supports for persons with disabilities (employees and visitors). Assess the experience of persons with disabilities during practice drills.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Objective

Information and communications technology provides all users, including those with disabilities, with leading edge tools that enhance capacity and improve efficiency.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure awareness of new and emerging accessible and enabling technology is up to date and that this information reaches a wide audience.
- Ensure adaptive technologies like speech recognition software are readily available.
- Regularly update internal digital systems as new accessibility technologies emerge.
- Reduce wait times for GC-wide support services like Shared Services Canada's (SSC's) Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program.
- Ensure catalogue of accessibility functions and assistive technology is available and reaches its target audience.
- Increase awareness of readily available training or assistance.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Provide guidance to frontline IT staff on supporting and communicating with persons with disabilities as it relates to setting up assistive technology. Defining the subset of staff that need training will be the Department's first-step priority.
- Build in accessibility from the start when developing new IT solutions and services by engaging employees who self-identify as persons with disabilities in design and testing.
- Leverage SSC's AAACT team to test solutions with a broad range of adaptive technologies when possible.

Longer-term commitments (2023-2025)

- Enable accessibility features on all devices provided by SSC.
- Assess accessibility of the Department's existing digital assets and develop remediation plans (e.g., intranet, technology platforms, videoconferencing technologies, ticketing system).
- Work with stakeholders and SSC's AAACT to build the Department's inventory and procurement processes for adaptive technologies.

Communications other than ICT

Objective

Make all communications accessible and inclusive for the public and employees.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Ensure information is always accessible to all employees.
- Consistently provide transcripts and captioning for presentations, meetings and videos.
- Ensure documents and templates created internally are always fully accessible.
- Ensure departmental events and activities are always inclusive and accessible to all employees.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Enable live captioning option in MS Teams for employee use during meetings and/or provide transcripts of meeting minutes afterwards.
- Provide training and guidance to all employees to better understand accessible communication techniques (including plain language writing) and incorporate inclusive practices during larger meetings and events.

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Obtain additional funding and resources to support accessibility for internal and external large events and meetings.
- Include/improve consistent live captioning in both official languages during large meetings and events.
- Create an internal repository (e.g., on intranet) for accessibility educational resources including compliance guidelines, accommodations support, disability awareness training, best practices and other key information.
- Develop relationships with accessible communication providers to use when needed (e.g., American Sign Language (ASL), Quebec Sign Language (QSL) and Indigenous sign languages).

Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods

Objective

Ensure the procurement and material management team and project authorities consider accessibility requirements in their specifications for procuring services, goods, and services related to goods, so that the deliverables provide the necessary accessibility features.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Involve persons with disabilities early in the procurement process.
- Simplify the process for procuring the services of external service providers.
- Ensure supplier diversity information is available during the procurement process.
- Ensure templates and documents used in procurement processes are always accessible.
- Consistently use accessibility assessment criteria in the evaluation process.
- Streamline the accommodations process for suppliers.

Short-term commitments (2023)

- Implement a mechanism for communicating the Department's commitment to accessibility and information about the accommodations process to suppliers.
- Review the procurement process, including documents, forms, templates and communications, to ensure accessible practices are reflected.

Longer-term commitments (2024-2025)

- Provide accessibility guidance on leading practices for accessible procurement to the procurement team and project authorities and on interacting/communicating with suppliers with disabilities.
- Consistently implement accessibility assessment criteria with the project authorities as part of the evaluation of all procured goods and services.

Culture change towards disability inclusion

Objective

Accessibility is integrated into the everyday business of the Department of Finance Canada.

Key barriers – areas for improvement

- Provide information and training including unconscious bias training as it relates to accessibility.
- Increase the representation of persons with disabilities at the management level.
- Provide guidance, training and advance preparation to enable employees who provide policy advice on services to meet clients' accessibility needs.
- Conduct consultations when designing accessible policies, services and programs.

Key commitments (2022-25)

- Raise awareness about the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*, including the realization of a barrier-free Canada, culture change, standards development, and monitoring and reporting

- Work with employees with disabilities to better integrate the Nothing Without Us principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices.

- Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion focused on knowledge sharing to build a disability-confident workforce.

- Leverage and strengthen Departmental governance committees to foster culture change.

- Create a working group consisting of employees with disabilities and accessibility pillar leads to:

  o develop a results framework and implementation plan; and

  o monitor progress and advance accessibility awareness and engagement activities within the Department.

- Create new tools and structures to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in the delivery of internal and external services.

Glossary

Accessibility
The degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all.

Accommodation
Any change in the working environment that allows a person with functional limitations in their abilities to do their job. Changes can include adjustments to the physical workspace, adaptations to equipment or tools, flexible work hours or job-sharing, relocation of the workspace, the ability to work from home, reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks for others, or time off for medical appointments. Accommodations (adjustments) can be temporary, periodic or long-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace.

Barrier
Anything 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. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal. (Source: Bill C-81: *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*)

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. (Source: Bill C-81: *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*)

Disability type
A form of limitation, be it physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory or other. In its 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada used screening questions to identify the following 10 types of disability: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, mental health-related, and memory. The screening questionnaire also contained a question concerning any other health problem or condition that has lasted or is expected to last for six months or more. This question was meant to be a catch-all in case the 10 disability types did not cover the respondent's situation. This question is associated with an 11th "unknown" disability type.

Employee
A person employed by the Department of Finance Canada.

Persons with disabilities
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. (Source: *Employment Equity Act*)

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*)

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 and 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*)