PrairiesCan

Accessibility Plan

2022

Table of Contents

General

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) is proud to introduce its first accessibility plan based on the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA).*

The ACA requires the publication of an accessibility plan respecting the organization's policies, programs, practices and services in relation to the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers.

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) is the federal department that supports economic growth in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Its programs and services help businesses, not-for-profits and communities grow stronger.

This accessibility plan identifies current activities and future inclusive efforts and priorities.

Departmental Feedback process

In line with the *Accessible Canada Act*, we will establish a departmental process for receiving and dealing with feedback regarding the implementation of the accessibility plan and barriers experienced by our employees and people who deal with our organization.

Send your accessibility questions, feedback and suggestions by phone, email or by letter to:

> Director General, Human Resources and Corporate Services
> Prairies Economic Development Canada
> Suite 1500-9700 Jasper Ave
> Edmonton AB T5J 4H7
> Telephone: 780-495-4164
> Toll Free: 1-888-338-WEST (9378)
> Fax: 780-495-4557
> Teletypewriter (TTY): 1-877-303-3388
> Email: WD.contactus-contactez-nous.DEO@prairiescan.gc.ca
> Feedback form

Consultations

The PrairiesCan Employee Resource Group (ERG), which includes members from all equity seeking groups and allies, including those that self-identify as a person with a disability, was consulted during the creation of this accessibility plan. This included one-on-one discussions and an open offer for employees and management to share

possible barriers, as well as best practices and opportunities in accessibility, specifically on the seven areas identified in the Accessible Canada Act.

Internal subject matter experts were consulted to identify current activities, and how PrairiesCan will continue to increase accessibility.

With the input collected, our action plan has been developed, with a focus on common themes identified, such as continuing to raise awareness and sharing of accessibility information.

PrairiesCan's Action Plan

As mentioned in the Clerk of the Privy Council's Call to Action, "*As persons with visible and invisible disabilities continue to face physical and technological barriers, the approaches we develop must be truly inclusive by also being truly accessible.*

Building a diverse, equitable and inclusive Public Service is both an obligation and an opportunity we all share. We must advance this objective together, acting both individually and collectively, and recognizing that our progress will rely on amplifying the voices of those within our organizations to help lead the way."

Below are the priorities for PrairiesCan that will support a more inclusive and accessible workplace and public service.

Priority Area: Employment

PrairiesCan is committed to having a diverse workforce comprised of individuals with an array of identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, perspectives / ways of thinking and experiences that are representative of Canada's current and evolving population.

We continue to prioritize meaningful action that represents the needs of our staff and department. That is why we are analyzing our recruitment processes for biases and barriers, providing accessibility focused training for all staff and guiding efforts on actions identified by an external accessibility expert who showed us that specific and deliberate actions make a big difference.

Our 2020 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) and 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey (SNPS) results demonstrate these efforts are making a difference. Our department has positive responses from questions relating to accommodation and accessibility in PSES and the SNPS, particularly when compared to similar size departments or the Public Service as a whole.

For example, the 2020 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES), Western Economic Diversification Canada (note: future PSES results will have PrairiesCan identified separately) included:

- 91% of respondents who self-identify as a person with a disability and 84% of overall departmental respondents agreed that the department implements activities and practices that support a diverse workplace;
- 92% of respondents who self-identify as a person with a disability and 87% of overall departmental respondents agreed that they felt comfortable requesting workplace accommodation measures from their immediate supervisor.

PrairiesCan will:

- Implement government-wide initiatives, including review of assessment methods in connection to the amendment of Section 36 of the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA), to remove and prevent barriers to recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities.
- Review and analyze updated PSES disaggregated results.
- Update PrairiesCan's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Plan.
- Increase education on accommodation throughout all stages on employment (for example appointment, onboarding, promotion etc.).
- Continue to support accommodation requests from employees and managers, including ergonomic assessments for new and current staff and support flexible work arrangements, where possible.
- Continue to promote training events to raise awareness, and create an inclusive culture and work environment.

Priority Area: Built Environment

PrairiesCan is expanding its on-the-ground footprint, bringing expertise and service access to new locations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Working closely with our partners at Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and building management companies, we leverage universal design principles to identify accessibility criteria for all our facilities. PrairiesCan offices are open environments with well-regulated air quality, ergonomic equipment including sit/stand workstations, and a combination of natural and fluorescent lighting.

PrairiesCan will:

- Continue to have accessibility as a mandatory consideration when securing new office space as well as the retrofitting of current leased space.
- Proactively work with building management companies to enhance accessibility in the built environment.

Priority Area: Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

PrairiesCan implemented the use of Microsoft Office 365, which includes compliant accessibility capabilities.

PrairiesCan IT staff have been able to work with employees and managers to get them the tools and equipment they need.   As noted in the 2020-21 Departmental Results Report, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged us to quickly implement IT solutions in order to adapt to a new working environment.   This included the installation of new video conference (VC) equipment and migration to Shared Services Canada's VC enterprise system. The new equipment provided improved connectivity and functionality for all staff. The introduction of Microsoft Teams also allowed staff to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PrairiesCan will:
- Continue to support the accommodation requests from employees to ensure they have the systems and equipment to do their job. [Accessible by default].
- Adopt new software that has accessibility capabilities built within it, whenever possible.

Priority Area: Communication, Other than ICT

PrairiesCan recognises the importance of accessible and inclusive communication internal to our department and when communicating with the public. Our external communications comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) and we create social media content with accessibility in mind. In a recent departmental rebranding exercise, accessibility was a key consideration for style, format, font and colour selections.

PrairiesCan will:
- Use plain language in communications to benefit all users, including those with low reading skills or cognitive disabilities.
- Continue to ensure that all external communication is WCAG 2.0 compliant, or greater.
- Redesign our internal website to ensure content and layout meets accessibility standards.
- Continue to promote accessibility within our organization, including International Day of Persons with Disabilities and National AccessAbility Week, as well as training events to raise awareness and create an inclusive culture and work environment.

Priority Area: Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Accessibility is a key consideration in procurement activities and when establishing contracts. All contracts document accessibility specifications, with resource support from the Accessible Resource Support Centre.

PrairiesCan will:
- Continue to consider accessibility when establishing all contracts.
- Leverage our purchasing power with a focus on social procurement and realize socio-economic objectives by including socio-economic measures within procurement processes.

Priority Area: Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Inclusivity is an element of PrairiesCan's core responsibility of economic development in the Prairies. Inclusivity consists of fostering inclusive growth by helping under-represented groups more fully participate in the economy. The department has identified nine specific under-represented groups, one of which is persons with disabilities.

PrairiesCan's core programs and time-limited programs do not specifically target persons with disabilities; however, support for this group is embedded within each program's priority areas as they include a focus on inclusivity (aligning with PrairiesCan's core responsibility and priorities).

In 1997, Western Economic Development Canada (WD) established the [Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program](#) (EDP) to enhance accessibility to critical business services and capital for entrepreneurs with disabilities who want to start or expand a business. The program is unique to Western Canada (i.e. PrairiesCan and PacifiCan are the only Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to deliver the program). Targeted specifically at supporting new and existing entrepreneurs with disabilities, the program provides business advisory services through in-depth one-on-one interactions, as well as through workshops and other training. PrairiesCan provides direct operational funding to urban and rural EDP service providers across the Prairies.

PrairiesCan will:
- Continue the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP).
- Review and analyze inclusivity data provided on applications, which provides information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving departmental funds, and contributes to PrairiesCan's [Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)](#) processes.

- Continue to inform applicants of the collection and use of inclusivity data from applications.

Priority Area: Transportation

This priority area under the Act is not applicable to PrairiesCan.

Looking forward

The Act seeks to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, to create a Canada without barriers, on or before January 1, 2040. As a Regional Development Agency, PrairiesCan has a key role to play in helping to achieve this goal.

PrairiesCan is committed to creating a diverse, safe, respectful, healthy, and inclusive workplace. This means a commitment to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to full participation for persons with disabilities. The department will continue to evolve and adapt this action plan, in consultation with key stakeholders, to meet the needs of employees and clients with disabilities.