



Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'inspection des aliments

Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
**Accessibility Plan**  
**Progress Report**  
**2023**



# Accessibility Plan Progress Report 2023 for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

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## Message from the CFIA President and the Executive Vice-President

We are pleased to present the CFIA's first annual Accessibility Plan Progress Report for the year 2023. This report focuses on the Agency's accountability and actions taken in our ongoing commitment to creating a fully accessible, respectful, and inclusive workplace that values and enables persons with disabilities.

Our journey began with the launch of the CFIA's [Accessibility plan](#), developed in response to the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and the Clerk of the Privy Council's 2021 [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#). This plan, an integral part of our broader Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2022 to 2025, outlines our dedication to fostering diversity, equity, and accessibility within the CFIA.

The CFIA's accessibility vision is to establish, maintain and support a fully accessible, respectful, and inclusive workplace that values and enables disabled persons. To work toward that vision, the accessibility plan has 5 goals:

- improving recruitment, retention and promotion of disabled persons
- making information and communications technology (ICT) accessible for everyone
- enhancing the accessibility of the built environment and transportation

- designing and delivering accessible programs and services (including procurement)
- creating and maintaining a culture of accessibility (includes communications other than ICT)

As we reflect on the progress made in 2023, we recognize that we are on a transformative journey. This is our first progress report, and its impact is already evident. It is essential to acknowledge the dedication of our employees, stakeholders, and partners who have contributed to the successes we have achieved so far.

We are committed to ongoing assessment and renewal. We will annually assess our progress and refine the plan every 3 years. We will rely on the performance measurement framework and the feedback of our employees to gauge our success and identify areas for improvement.

We want to emphasize that the success of our accessibility plan depends on the active engagement of every member of our CFIA family. All employees are encouraged to learn about accessibility, collaborate with disabled persons to understand their experiences, and actively contribute to an accessible culture. Together, we can bring our vision of accessibility to life and contribute to the Government of Canada's ambition of being the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world.

**Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar**

President

**J.-G. Forgeron**

Executive Vice-President

# General

## Overview of the progress report

The CFIA's first annual Accessibility Plan Progress Report offers a comprehensive assessment of our efforts in fostering accessibility and inclusivity within the CFIA. We have structured our report to align with the mandatory headings outlined in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act* while providing a clear and detailed account of our progress.

The report addresses the following critical areas:

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

In each of these areas, we describe our progress in removing or preventing barriers identified in our accessibility plan, provide insights into updated timelines and actions, acknowledge any new barriers that have come to our attention and discuss any long-term plans that continue to shape our accessibility journey.

In our progress reports, we also provide comprehensive information about:

- how we have engaged with persons with disabilities to gather their perspectives and experiences

- the methods we have employed to collect feedback and provide an account of the valuable insights we have received through this process
- how the feedback received from persons with disabilities has informed and influenced our actions and decision-making

The Executive Director of Workplace Health and Diversity will be responsible for oversight, monitoring, and reporting of the CFIA's accessibility plan and progress reports.

### **A note on usage**

While advocates, including government, have advised using person-first language ("person/people with a disability"), many disability advocates now promote using identity-first language ("disabled person/people").

To reflect that diversity of views, we have used both versions in this document.

### **The CFIA feedback process**

The Chief of Audit and Evaluation and the **Speak Up, We're Listening** program will be responsible for receiving feedback on barriers and accessibility at the CFIA.

Feedback may be provided to the Speak Up, We're Listening program via online form, telephone, mail, and email.

We will acknowledge all accessibility feedback in the same manner in which it was received, except feedback that is sent anonymously.

By online form:

## Accessibility feedback form

### **By telephone:**

Phone lines are open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday to Friday.

Toll-free: 1-855-670-0943

### **By mail:**

Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
c/o Speak Up, We're Listening  
1400 Merivale Road, Tower 1  
Floor 6, Room 258  
Ottawa ON K1A 0Y9

### **By email:**

[CFIA.SpeakUp-OsezParler.ACIA@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:CFIA.SpeakUp-OsezParler.ACIA@inspection.gc.ca)

This contact information will allow CFIA employees and the public to do the following:

- request the CFIA's accessibility plan, as well as progress reports in 1 of the alternate formats described in subsection 8(2) of the regulations
- request the description of the CFIA's feedback process in 1 of the alternate formats described in subsection 9(5) of the regulations
- provide feedback to the CFIA on barriers and accessibility

These contact options are designed to facilitate communication between the CFIA and its employees, as well as the public, with a focus on promoting accessibility and ensuring compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act's* requirements. Your input and feedback are highly valued as we work together to create a more inclusive and accessible Canada.

## Progress update

### **Goal 1: Improve recruitment, retention, and promotion of disabled persons**

#### **Employment**

In pursuit of fostering a more accessible employment environment, the CFIA has undertaken a series of measures outlined in this report to improve employment and representation of disabled persons at the CFIA. Under Goal 1 of the Agency's accessibility plan, actions focus on identifying barriers and solutions, removing barriers, and maintaining accessible recruitment, retention, and promotion systems and processes.

One key initiative to enhance the Agency's recruitment systems and processes involved revising the standard wording on job posters to explicitly communicate that employees may be reasonably accommodated, not only during the staffing process but also in the workplace and related work events. This important language revision ensures that potential candidates are aware of the Agency's commitment to inclusivity from the outset of their application process.



The CFIA's commitment to diversity and accessibility is evident in its participation in various targeted recruitment initiatives for persons with disabilities. These initiatives include:

- attending targeted career fairs at local universities and colleges
- collaborating with organizations like LiveWorkPlay, which aims to help workplaces hire and welcome persons with disabilities
- promoting targeted inventories for persons with disabilities in the fields of Data and Policy, Digital Technology, and Finance
- creating assessed pools of students who have self-declared to be Persons with a Disability for hiring managers to select from
- planning to launch a new persons with disabilities student inventory in December 2023, with an anticipated completion date of February 2024, and
- launching a national, external entry-level pool for the CR-04/CR-05/AS-01 classification groups and levels for persons with disabilities prior to the end of 2023

The Agency has collaborated with the Public Service Commission and other federal departments to develop a persons with disabilities staffing process in the scientific field. The Human Resources Branch (HRB) within the Agency was involved in all stages of the process, including development of the statement of merit criteria and poster, assessment materials and collaboration at each phase of the staffing process. The Agency has hired 2 employees from this inventory to date.

HRB has compiled a list of employment equity sources of talent, serving as an alternative to traditional staffing options. Human resources advisors actively refer to this list when presenting options to managers. In addition to this, an information deck has been created for managers and operational staffing advisors to outline options for diversity and inclusion at every stage of the hiring process.

Furthermore, accessibility considerations have been integrated into branch-level human resources planning strategies for the human resources planning process. These considerations are now an integral part of human resources planning and will extend to any Agency-wide strategies that are developed in the future.

To address gaps in representation and under-representation concerns, the CFIA has taken a holistic approach. A working group, composed of interdepartmental teams, was created and is actively working on a proposal to rectify the under-representation concerns within the CFIA. Currently, the proposal is undergoing a consultation process to ensure a collaborative and well-informed approach to addressing this matter.

To further address under-representation gaps, HRB compiles employment equity data and workforce availability data to be used to discuss hiring options with managers that will reduce gaps in representation. HRB also prepares packages of information for managers, facilitating in-depth discussions about representation gaps at the area, branch, and occupational group levels, this information is also included in annual human resources planning exercises. This comprehensive analysis helps identify precisely where these gaps exist, enabling targeted strategies for improvement.

The CFIA has committed to promoting the benefits of self-identification to increase the CFIA's ability to recognize and support disabled employees and job applicants. The Agency currently has a self-identification response rate of 93.9% as of March 31, 2023, however, to further enhance self-identification, the agency will launch a Self-Identification Campaign in 2024 with an approach aimed at raising awareness, reducing stigma, and encouraging employees to update their self-identification information as needed. This campaign ensures that employees feel empowered to self-identify and contribute to building a more diverse and inclusive workplace within the Agency.

The CFIA acknowledges that having a fully accessible employment process does not stop at closing representation gaps and recruiting disabled persons. To further support disabled persons, the CFIA has taken steps to improve the retention of disabled employees and to address barriers in this area.

A noteworthy achievement has been the establishment of duty to accommodate case managers and coordinators on a national scale within the CFIA. These dedicated professionals play a vital role in providing essential accommodation support and services, effectively managing accommodation cases and raising awareness to help managers fulfill their delegated responsibilities. The commitment to awareness and education is further exemplified through ongoing training sessions for managers.

Furthermore, the CFIA is in the final stages of developing a comprehensive intranet presence that will serve as a valuable hub for resources on accessibility, disability management, and duty to accommodate. Content for

the hub has been validated and consulted on, and the target is to have the content posted and shared with all employees in early 2024. This initiative will provide in-depth information and guidance, empowering employees to navigate these areas effectively.

The changing landscape of the workplace, influenced by the new hybrid work model, has prompted the CFIA to re-evaluate how work is performed in this evolving context. The Agency recognizes the need for case-by-case solutions, as the previous rules and flexibilities may no longer apply. To meet this challenge, the CFIA has approved funding for hiring additional accessibility resources, with staffing started in the fall of 2023. The new accessibility staff will also focus on various other areas, including promoting and implementing the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport for disabled employees.

Finally, the CFIA has actively championed the promotion of persons with disabilities through a multi-faceted approach. Targeted strategies have been built into the human resources planning process with a deliberate focus on prioritizing persons with disabilities for career development opportunities at the executive level. The Agency continues to encourage branch heads to consider equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) factors when nominating non-executive employees as future leaders. For future leaders at both the executive and non-executive levels, EDI data is used to ensure access to leadership and training opportunities.

The CFIA's dedication to promoting persons with disabilities is further emphasized by the Agency's efforts to ensure that all selection boards at the executive level maintain diversity. A substantial portion (50%) of nominees

for Canada School of Public Service training at the EX-01 to EX-03 levels were from employment equity groups, emphasizing a proactive stance on promoting persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the CFIA's current policy on official languages provides flexibility to managers to offer non-imperative appointments for reasons of disability or other employment equity reasons for faster staffing, while making commitment to offer language training to meet their position.

The CFIA has not identified any new barriers to employment since the release of the accessibility plan, however, by monitoring and taking continuous action on feedback about barriers, the CFIA will continue to improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of disabled persons.

## **Goal 2: Make information and communications technology accessible for everyone**

### **Information and communication technologies**

The CFIA has made significant strides in ensuring that information and communications technology (ICT) is accessible to all employees. Under Goal 2 of the Agency's accessibility plan, actions have been taken to identify and remove barriers, resulting in tangible enhancement to ICT accessibility. The Agency has updated existing ICT systems, tested and launched new accessibility tools and features, and began educating staff on how to make ICT accessible. With a proactive approach to continuous improvement, the CFIA is dedicated to fostering an inclusive digital environment for all employees.

To promote accessibility during meetings, the Agency has created and shared with all staff "Etiquette in a hybrid-meeting environment," a guidance document that underlines accessibility considerations and features for ensuring inclusive meetings. Additionally, the Digital Services Branch's (DSB) newsletter has been revamped, transitioning from an inaccessible PDF format to an accessible MS Word format.

The revamped newsletter now adheres to critical accessibility standards, including plain language, built-in heading styles, a sans-serif font of appropriate size, alternative text for images, and meaningful hyperlink text, ensuring that all employees, including those with physical, sensory, or mental disabilities, can access and comprehend the same information. To further educate staff on accessibility best practices and available training opportunities, an "Accessibility Spotlight" has been introduced in the newsletter.

In 2023, the CFIA also introduced Microsoft 365 (M365) tools equipped with upgraded accessibility features, benefiting Agency employees. These features include:

- Accessibility Checker, which identifies and offers guidance on removing accessibility barriers within documents
- Color Filters, adjusting the on-screen color palette to aid those with visual impairments
- Dark Mode for reducing visual fatigue from bright backgrounds
- Microsoft Translator providing real-time subtitles during presentations for employees with hearing impairments

- Microsoft Stream, which auto-generates video captions for the same group
- Dictation for speech-to-text content creation to assist those with typing difficulties
- an advanced Editor for proofreading and editing
- Immersive Reader for customizable document appearance to optimize reading and content authoring for all employees

The CFIA has initiated a comprehensive planning sprint to inventory and map the Agency's current ICT in the domains of information and data access, technology software, and technology hardware. Collaborating closely with persons with disabilities, several interdepartmental teams will review the inventory through an accessibility lens to identify barriers, marking a significant step forward in the Agency's pursuit of enhancing ICT accessibility.

The CFIA has also researched and leveraged existing platforms that could improve the accessibility of the Agency's ICT. An example of this is the pilot of GC Forms as the platform for the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign event intake form, which is both cost-effective and compliant with accessibility standards. There have also been updates to processes for requesting non-standard ICT, for example a request was submitted and approved to purchase the Ava application, which offers an advanced captioning solution for a fully accessible workplace for deaf and hard of hearing employees. These collective efforts showcase the CFIA's dedication to ensuring that ICT is accessible and inclusive for all employees.

The CFIA is making remarkable strides in promoting science-based career paths for the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) community. In an initial stage of this initiative, the Agency engineered a mobile Microsoft (MS) Teams-enabled solution using the latest audiovisual technologies in the Burnaby laboratory. The solution's improved audio/video quality, along with the sign language feature in MS Teams meetings, has greatly enhanced the ability of D/HH employees at the laboratory to engage at work, from improved training, to easier participation in meetings and events, to better collaboration with colleagues. As part of this project, American Sign Language training has been completed by multiple employees at the Burnaby laboratory to support an inclusive communication environment for D/HH.

Furthermore, the Agency is actively engaging with the Interdepartmental Accessibility Community of Practice to learn from other departments and agencies working toward ICT accessibility improvements. The Agency's expressed interest in joining the Disability Inclusion and Workplace Accommodation Community of Practice highlights a strong commitment to continued learning and collaboration in this realm.

To comply with web accessibility requirements, the CFIA has led the migration to a new web content management system with built-in add-ons for web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) compliance. This system, set to be implemented in early 2024, will streamline the process of ensuring accessibility for web content. It will also feature a Content Readability add-on, providing readability scores and feedback to content owners for continuous improvement.



Moreover, the CFIA has established a process requiring approval from branch heads, along with a mitigation plan for non-accessible web content. To date, no requests for approval have been received, emphasizing the CFIA's proactive stance in addressing accessibility challenges.

Regarding external content, the CFIA has established a section on its external website that is exclusively devoted to accessibility at the Agency. This section serves as a valuable platform for users to provide feedback, and features a user-friendly feedback link and comprehensive information on the feedback process. It outlines the various methods through which feedback can be submitted, guides users on requesting alternate formats, explains the steps taken with the feedback received, and even provides insights on how to maintain feedback anonymity.

In addition, the external website now includes a new feature, "Report a problem with page", at the bottom of various web pages for users to share their feedback on newly launched pages and targeted content for improvements. This approach allows users an additional option to communicate their challenges and seek assistance in finding the information they need.

To further improve ICT at the Agency, discussions with various CFIA teams have started looking at ways to capture accessibility issues with CFIA services. A pop-up survey is being considered and would link to the CFIA Accessibility Feedback form. This proactive approach underlines the CFIA's commitment to continuous improvement, user-centricity, and fostering an accessible digital environment for all stakeholders.

## **Goal 3: Enhance the accessibility of the built environment and transportation**

### **Built environment**

Dedicated to fostering an accessible and inclusive environment, the CFIA has made substantial progress in enhancing the accessibility of its built environment. Under Goal 3 of the Agency's accessibility plan, the CFIA's efforts focus on identifying barriers and solutions, removing barriers, and maintaining accessible spaces.

To maintain and enhance the accessibility of its built environment the CFIA has been diligently working on developing a comprehensive Real Property Management Strategy. This strategy encompasses a thorough assessment of the Agency's existing real property portfolio, asset conditions, operational processes, governance structures, and recommendations for improvements. Ultimately, this strategy will align with broader government priorities, with a strong emphasis on accessibility, sustainability, and Indigenous reconciliation.

The Real Property Management Strategy, which is a vital initial step in realizing the CFIA's portfolio vision, has been designed to ensure accessibility is an integral component of future real property planning. Given the complexity and the extensive consultation required for this project, its finalization has been extended to early 2024.

Furthermore, the Agency has actively undertaken accessibility assessments of common areas in its custodial buildings. In the Charlottetown laboratory, such an assessment was conducted in 2022 to 2023, and a similar

assessment is scheduled for completion in the Calgary laboratory in 2024 to 2025. Currently, 16% of the CFIA common spaces in custodial buildings have been assessed for accessibility.

In line with its commitment to accessibility, the CFIA is also proactively incorporating accessibility considerations in new construction projects. The new Sidney laboratory, set to be completed in 2025, has been designed to meet the universal accessibility requirements specified by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. This design ensures that all functional spaces adhere to accessibility standards, including circulation footprints, clearances, and features. Accessibility specialists from Laboratories Canada are actively involved in the design process, providing valuable insights and guidance to ensure a fully accessible built environment.

Building on its technological efforts to promote science-based career paths for the D/HH community, the CFIA has also initiated a project at the Burnaby laboratory to create open-concept workspaces that accommodate the needs of D/HH employees and students, facilitating visual communication and the use of auxiliary aids and assistive technologies. These modifications will create office and laboratory environments conducive to the work and safety of D/HH individuals, promoting their recruitment, training, and integration. This innovative project is expected to serve as a model that can be scaled for other CFIA laboratories and potentially for other labs within the Health portfolio. The project's design was completed in October 2023, with construction expected to commence in early 2024, followed by occupancy shortly thereafter.

To further align accessibility practices with the broader public service, the CFIA has initiated consultations with other science-based government departments such as Health Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and Public Service and Procurement Canada, to share best practices, see what they are doing to remove accessibility barriers in the built environment, and assess whether they are feasible for the CFIA.

These initiatives collectively highlight the CFIA's dedication to ensuring the accessibility of its built environment and creating an inclusive and barrier-free space for all.

## **Transportation**

There is no progress to report on related to transportation at this time.

## **Goal 4: Design and deliver accessible programs and services (including procurement)**

To make the CFIA's programs, services, and procurement processes accessible, the Agency's Goal 4 actions focus on identifying barriers and solutions, removing barriers, and designing and delivering accessible programs, services, and procurement processes.

### **Design and delivery of programs and services**

The CFIA has made significant improvements to the design and delivery of accessible programs and services.

The CFIA is working on updating its service initiation (SI) pages to make them more accessible. This initiative includes streamlining content by removing outdated, unnecessary, and repetitive information. The Agency has also employed the VisibleThread tool to make language as plain as possible, ensuring that information is easily understood by users. Re-formatting information using the SI page template in the Canada.ca design system contributes to consistency and user-friendliness. Additionally, the CFIA is enhancing breadcrumb navigation for service pages on its website. These measures aim to make service pages accessible, consistent, client-centric, and easy to use.

The CFIA is leveraging existing tools and technologies to assess the accessibility of its services. These tools help identify and document barriers to accessibility, ensuring that issues are pinpointed and addressed effectively. The use of VisibleThread to simplify language further enhances accessibility for clients.

Additionally, the Agency is in the process of adding an accessibility checkpoint into the current and next iteration of its Services Intake Questionnaire to start socializing accessibility considerations. This will ensure that anyone requesting a service or product, whether an individual or a team, considers accessibility from the start.

The CFIA is also in the process of incorporating an accessibility-specific question into its Walk Me survey, which collects user feedback on My CFIA, the portal for many of the Agency's services. This addition will enable the Agency to gather valuable insights and identify any barriers in the accessibility of services on My CFIA.

The CFIA has been proactive in building partnerships and knowledge sharing. By joining the Interdepartmental Accessibility Community of Practice, the Agency is actively learning from other departments and agencies, discovering best practices, and exploring strategies to remove barriers in the design and delivery of programs and services. The CFIA is committed to continuous improvement and aims to leverage successful approaches from other departments to enhance accessibility in its services.

### **Procurement of goods, services and facilities**

The CFIA has demonstrated a strong commitment to embedding accessibility considerations in procurement processes, promoting awareness, and providing training and tools to employees involved in accessible procurement of goods, services, and construction. The CFIA initially identified 3 key action areas aimed at removing or preventing barriers:

- establish and implement a process to embed accessibility considerations in procurement processes from the start, including the identification of requirements
- establish and implement a process to monitor procurement processes to confirm that contracts include accessibility considerations
- promote awareness and provide guidance, training, and tools to responsible CFIA business owners and procurement specialists on accessible procurement

Under these 3 action areas, specific activities were identified, with estimated completion dates for most of these activities in 2023. As of October 2023, several of these activities have been successfully completed.

In June 2022, the CFIA launched a new digital procurement ticketing application called ePro, which plays a pivotal role in embedding accessibility considerations in procurement processes. The application allows clients (CFIA business owners) to create electronic procurement requests, obtain responsibility center manager approval, submit to the procurement division for action, and track requests throughout the procurement process. The application was designed to be user-friendly, with an interactive smart form that provides direction and refers users to relevant templates and information guides. Importantly, it incorporates an accessible procurement certification as a mandatory field in ePro, which business owners must complete before proceeding with their procurement requests. This certification ensures that accessibility considerations are taken into account at the requirement identification stage. By making the Accessible Procurement Certification in ePro mandatory, the CFIA can monitor procurement processes and confirm that contracts include accessibility considerations.

Since the formalization of the accessibility plan, the Agency also had the opportunity to promote and provided guidance, training, and tools to procurement specialists and business owners on accessible procurement, which is an ongoing activity as accessible procurement continues to evolve across the federal government.

As part of the initiatives, the Agency has taken various steps to ensure compliance with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Directive on the Management of Procurement. Business owners are required to complete an accessibility certification for every Agency procurement. The Accessible Procurement Certification in ePro emphasizes the consideration of accessibility in the procurement of goods, services, and construction at the requirement identification stage. This certification is a mandatory field in ePro, meaning that CFIA business owners cannot proceed with their procurement requests until they have completed it. The application also features a mechanism to provide data analytics on the Accessible Procurement Certifications.

To further support accessible procurement, guidance and additional resources on Accessible Procurement have been directly included in ePro. Additionally, the Procurement 101 training, has been updated to include a segment on accessible procurement. This training provides business owners with an overview of how procurement is conducted at the CFIA.

Two additional activities identified in the removal of barriers related to procurement have been deferred to fiscal year 2024 to 2025. One of these activities is to update the CFIA Procurement and Contracting Directive to include a section on accessible procurement. The delay is primarily due to the Agency's plan to review the full suite of internal process documents, including the CFIA Procurement and Contracting Directive in 2024 to 2025. The intention is to archive the current directive and replace it with new documentation that incorporates relevant information on accessible procurement.



The second activity is to prepare an Agency-wide information bulletin to promote accessible procurement and increase awareness for CFIA business owners. The Agency has deferred this activity to fiscal year 2024 to 2025, as additional tools and information are expected to become available for business owners through ongoing initiatives by the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to assist the procurement community in applying accessibility requirements in procurement.

The CFIA regularly collaborates with other government departments on how the procurement community of practice can progress the Government of Canada's social policy goals, including accessible procurement. The CFIA participates in multiple forums such as Public Services and Procurement Canada Client Advisory Board, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Senior Designated Official Council Meeting (Procurement and Material Management), and the Canadian Institute for Procurement and Materiel Management workshops and roundtables. These fora enable departments and agencies, including the CFIA, to discuss how to apply relevant approaches, lessons learned and good practices to remove accessibility barriers in federal procurement systems and processes. Through these fora and discussions at the working level, the CFIA is able to stay informed on what other federal government organizations are doing to remove barriers, which includes staying up-to-date on the various tools and guidance documents currently under development at PSPC. These activities will remain ongoing as accessible procurement continues to evolve across the federal government.

Finally, while no new barriers have been identified, the CFIA still intends to provide information sessions, training, and tools to procurement specialists to promote awareness of accessible procurement. While this activity was initially completed in June 2022 with the launch of ePro, it will remain an ongoing activity as accessible procurement practices continue to evolve across the federal government.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate the CFIA's commitment to embedding accessibility considerations in procurement processes and promoting an accessible and inclusive procurement environment for the acquisition of goods, services, and construction.

## **Goal 5: Create and maintain a culture of accessibility**

### **Communication, other than information and communication technologies**

"Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)", as identified in the act, differ from the CFIA's because commitments and activities related to these areas are reflected under our organization's "Culture" priority area.

The CFIA has made commendable progress in fostering a culture of accessibility, aligning with Goal 5 of its accessibility plan, which focuses on driving behavioural change, so that accessibility becomes part of the Agency's culture.

The CFIA's commitment to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and accessible workplace is evident through a comprehensive training initiative that encompasses various aspects of accessibility. The Agency actively promotes

the availability of training options provided by the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) to executives, managers, and staffing advisors, particularly emphasizing the importance of inclusive hiring practices. Accessibility training has also been incorporated into the executive performance agreements, leading to significant progress. There has been a noticeable increase in the percentage of executives who have completed mandatory training programs, such as "Preventing Harassment and Violence in the Workplace for Employees (WMT101)," "Preventing Harassment and Violence in the Workplace for Managers and Health and Safety Committees (WMT102)," and "Moving from Bias to Inclusion." Completion rates for these programs, including an impressive 98.1% for "WMT101," highlight the CFIA's dedication to creating an inclusive and respectful workplace. Furthermore, some training programs have been made mandatory for all employees, resulting in improvements in completion rates.

The CFIA has made significant strides in fostering engagement at all levels of the organization and promoting awareness to combat myths, eliminate stigma, and cultivate an accessibility-aware culture. Notably, there has been an increase in the number of awareness sessions and discussion series held across various fora, including the Senior Management Committee, branch events, and the National Managers' Community. The Employee Accessibility Network (EAN), within the Agency has played a pivotal role in organizing these sessions, including a conference in celebration of World Autism Awareness Day. To further raise awareness, the network shares valuable information, resources, and events from other federal government departments and agencies through various internal platforms.

Several messages in various formats have been shared with staff across the Agency to promote training and awareness-raising events. Internal messages, have played a crucial role in raising awareness, with notable events like Global Accessibility Awareness Day, National AccessAbility Week, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month being highlighted. These messages also touch on key themes such as inclusion, diversity, and etiquette in a hybrid meeting environment. Additionally, the Agency has actively shared updates on its efforts through intranet pages, keeping employees informed about the accessibility plan, Health Accommodation Office, and updates to pages related to Equity and Diversity Networks.

In terms of internal and external products, the CFIA ensures the accessibility of its videos by providing captions and transcripts, aligning with the Government of Canada's accessibility directives. Graphic design and imagery are leveraged effectively to convey key messages and reflect Canada's diverse population, always accompanied by alternative text (or alt text) for enhanced accessibility.

The CFIA has put in place an annual communications and engagement plan, encompassing various initiatives like "Beyond Barriers" series, which seeks to foster a greater understanding of the important work persons with disabilities do every day at the Agency through storytelling and honest conversation. Under this initiative, the CFIA has created compelling videos, such as "Beyond Barriers: Living with ADHD" accompanied by transcripts and captions to ensure accessibility. Two additional videos highlighting

personal experiences with sight loss are nearing completion and will be promoted in the new year. Additional video and non-video means of promoting awareness and creating a culture of inclusion are being explored.

Furthermore, the CFIA also continues to work towards developing and implementing an annual communication and engagement plan to raise the CFIA awareness and understanding of workplace accommodation. However, with the new hybrid work model and prescribed presence, the physical landscape of the office has shifted drastically and has required the Agency to work to reframe how work can be completed in this context as the previous rules and flexibilities no longer apply.

The CFIA has been actively promoting its equity, diversity, and inclusion networks, including the Employee Accessibility Network (EAN), with a strong focus on driving membership growth. This promotion is achieved through various means, including the regular dissemination of information through internal bulletins and emails to employee networks and the National Managers' Community. Each communication encourages interested employees to join the EAN, fostering an inclusive environment. The CFIA has witnessed an increase in membership following different events and communication products, exemplified by the significant participation surge after the December 2022 Beyond Barriers event. Furthermore, to enhance membership, the CFIA is working on anti-stigma initiatives, aiming to make the EAN more inclusive. Despite the challenge of tracking precise membership numbers, given the difficulty in accounting for employees who

have left the Agency from each network, the CFIA maintains a running tally of members on the distribution list, using these figures as rough guidelines rather than stable metrics.

In the realm of staffing processes, the CFIA has made notable progress with the introduction of the Diverse Selection Board Members Inventory (DSBMI), which represents a significant advancement in promoting equity and fairness during staffing procedures. The DSBMI comprises dedicated CFIA employees who voluntarily participate as selection board members, actively supporting the Agency's vision of inclusivity. The launch of the DSBMI occurred in April 2023, accompanied by a comprehensive suite of tools and resources. Currently, the program boasts approximately 50 registered employees, 5 of which (10%) are persons with disabilities, who are eager to participate. Despite this program being new, the CFIA will continue to raise awareness of the significance of this initiative to hiring managers and persons with disabilities to increase utilization and participation, demonstrating the CFIA's unwavering commitment to establishing a diverse, accessible, and equitable staffing environment.

The CFIA has made significant strides in improving the culture of accessibility within the Agency, however we will continue to collect and use feedback from disabled employees to identify and address areas where the CFIA's communications and broader culture does not support accessibility.

# Feedback

The **Speak Up, We're Listening** program is responsible for receiving feedback on barriers and accessibility at the CFIA. Feedback can be provided via online form, telephone, mail, and email. All accessibility feedback was acknowledged in the same manner in which it was received.

A summary of the feedback received since the posting of the CFIA's Accessibility plan is included below:

- Feedback categories (section 5 of *Accessibility Canada Act*):
  - Employment: 1 submission
  - Built environment: 1 submission
  - Design and delivery of programs and services: 2 submissions
  - Information and communication technologies: 1 submission
- No feedback was submitted for the areas of procurement of goods, services and facilities, transportation, and communication, other than ICT
- Other feedback:
  - 2 submissions unrelated to *Accessibility Canada Act* section 5 areas

All feedback has been reviewed and shared with the lead of the area that the feedback is addressing for action or review. The feedback has been taken into account as part of the continuous improvement of our accessibility efforts.

# Consultations

In November and December of 2023, the CFIA conducted a comprehensive consultation process to gather valuable insights and feedback for the development of this report.

These consultations were carried out through a combination of communication channels to ensure inclusivity and engagement. We used email correspondence feedback, organized a virtual focus group to foster interactive discussions, and called committee meetings to explore specific aspects of our accessibility initiatives. The Agency consulted on our progress with the following groups:

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Equity and Diversity Steering Committee
- Employee Accessibility Network
- National Managers' Community
- Senior Management Committee

We asked the following questions of all participants:

- Have you experienced or are you aware of any additional barriers to accessibility that have not been addressed in the accessibility plan
- From your viewpoint, are there any other significant achievements or milestones related to accessibility within the CFIA not mentioned in the report up to this point
- Have there been any notable shifts in employee awareness, engagement, and cultural or organizational attitudes toward accessibility and inclusivity within the CFIA since the launch of the plan



- What specific areas or aspects of accessibility do you believe require more attention, resources, or improvements, and what recommendations or suggestions do you have for further enhancing the effectiveness of the CFIA's accessibility plan and ensuring its success in the future
- How can the CFIA better engage and involve various stakeholders, including employees, in the ongoing efforts to advance accessibility and inclusivity
- Do you have any other comments related to accessibility within the CFIA

## **Results of consultations**

In seeking feedback from the various groups, including individuals with disabilities, valuable insights have been gathered regarding additional barriers to accessibility, areas of accessibility that require additional improvements, and shifts in employee awareness and engagement, since the launch of the CFIA's accessibility plan. Below is a summary of the feedback collected on accessibility initiatives within the CFIA:

### **Employee awareness**

- increase promotion of accessibility resources to employees; some employees still face perceived barriers that have been addressed, indicating a gap in awareness and communication
- improve communication of accessibility progress, ensuring it reaches a broader audience beyond EAN members

### **Employee and stakeholder engagement**

- establish networks with local advocacy organizations to connect with communities of interest
- explore the experiences of persons with disabilities through more informal settings, such as listening sessions
- increase membership in the EAN by highlighting its benefits for greater employee engagement
- make a deliberate effort to highlight accessibility in service delivery, employee communication, and partnerships.

### **Training material**

- address format of online courses with background music, which interfere with hearing aids and devices and create learning barriers for deaf and hard of hearing employees
- explore offering of training courses should in multiple formats to cater to diverse accessibility needs

### **Selection criteria and job posters**

- review and enhance inclusivity of selection criteria on job posters
- ensure criteria reflect job requirements and do not limit opportunities for persons with disabilities
- explore ways to better utilize the unique experiences and strengths that persons with disabilities can bring to various positions

### **Recruitment**

- acknowledge the need for increased focus on recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities

- address under-representation of employees who self-identify as Persons with Disabilities
  - The CFIA is currently underrepresented with employees who self-identify as Persons with Disabilities by 321 employees (48% CFIA representation of workforce availability) as of September 30, 2023, although this is an improvement from 338 (45% CFIA representation of workforce availability) employees as of March 31, 2023, additional measures need to be put in place to address the under-representation
- implement additional targeted processes across classification groups and levels to close the representation gap

### **Job requirements**

- explore flexible solutions, beyond formal accommodations, for persons with disabilities facing challenges completing specific job tasks due to their limitation
- encourage managers to consider delegating tasks or adjusting position needs when necessary

### **Document accessibility**

- recognize that further attention is required in making emails, documents, and communication materials accessible
- clarify and standardize process for requesting alternate formats of published documents

Overall, the feedback suggests the need for improved communication, increased awareness, and targeted actions in training, recruitment, and job requirements to enhance accessibility and inclusivity within the CFIA.

## **Give feedback on this progress report**

[Provide feedback](#)

## **Accessibility progress reports developed by other institutions**

[List of accessibility progress reports developed by other institutions](#)

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