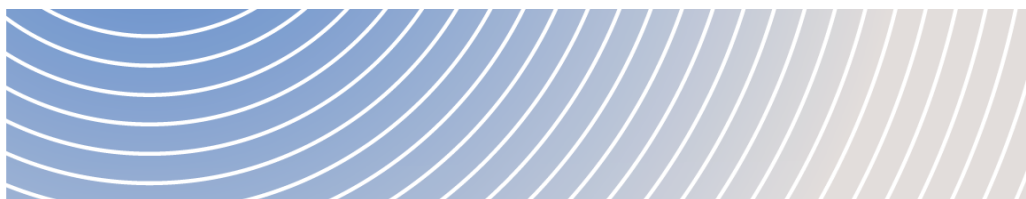Impact Assessment
Agency of Canada

Agence d'évaluation
d'impact du Canada

2023 Accessibility Progress Report

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AGENCY OF CANADA'S ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

December 2023

Canada

Contents

List of abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
Act	*Accessible Canada Act*
Accessibility Passport	Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport
Agency	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
CASAs	Client Accommodation Service Advisors
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
EEDI	Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
Plan	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's Accessibility Plan
Report	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's Accessibility Report
SSC	Shared Services Canada
TBS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Glossary

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
Barrier	Any obstacle — including physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal that is based on information or communications that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.
Disability	Any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or 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.

General

Contact Information

Designated Person to receive feedback on barriers and on the IAAC Accessibility Plan:

Director of Workplace, Talent Management and Executive Services

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Feedback Process

Any persons in Canada who engage with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) may:

- submit feedback on the Agency's implementation of the Accessibility Plan and the Accessibility Report;
- report accessibility barriers they might have encountered when engaging with the Agency; and/or
- request copies of the Accessibility Plan, Progress Report and Feedback Process in an alternate format (the processing time for alternate formats is 15 days from the request date).

Feedback may be submitted anonymously by mail, telephone, or email. Except in cases where feedback is received anonymously, an acknowledgement of receipt will be provided.

All feedback received is coordinated and shared by the Director of Workplace, Talent Management and Executive Services.

Summary

In 2019, the *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) came into force with the goal of achieving a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040. In response, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) developed an Accessibility Plan (the Plan) that outlines the mechanisms needed to identify, address, and prevent visible and invisible barriers to accessibility at the Agency. The overall objective of the Plan is to ensure that persons with disabilities are represented and treated equitably and with dignity. Implementation of the Plan began in December 2022.

This Accessibility Report (the Report) details the Agency's progress in implementing of the Plan according to the priority areas outlined in Section 5 of the Act:

1. Employment

2. Built environment

3. Information and communication technology (ICT)

4. Communication, other than ICT

5. Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

6. Design and delivery of programs and services

7. Transportation

8. Culture

For each area, the Report provides:

- an update on the progress; and
- information on long-term plans or activities that may extend beyond the current planning and reporting cycle.

The last two sections of the Report focus on:

- consultations with persons with disabilities, including the Agency's employee surveys; and
- feedback received on development and implementation of the Plan.

The Agency's vision for accessibility

The Agency's vision is of an inclusive, barrier-free, and accessible organization where persons (staff, partners, stakeholders, and members of the public) of all abilities are well supported and represented.

Key Commitments

The Agency is committed to removing barriers for persons with disabilities and instilling a culture of inclusivity and belonging that includes:

- The organization offers accessible learning, development opportunities, and mandatory training for employees across all levels and areas of expertise.
- Systematic processes are in place to promptly address accommodation requests within the organization, ensuring quick feedback on methods for improvements.
- There is emphasis on increasing the recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities through targeted staffing processes and support for their career advancement.
- Continuous efforts are made to enhance the accessibility of both physical and digital environments for employees, stakeholders, and the general public.

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- Regular engagement is conducted to ensure that policies, programs, services, and communications are inclusive, barrier-free, and responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Areas in Section 5 of the Act and Progress

The implementation of specific accessibility actions items at the Agency is overseen by each responsible teams in collaboration with the Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) team, Diversity and Inclusion co-champions, the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee, and the Accessibility Network. The following sections describe the steps taken and progress made in implementing the Agency's Accessibility Plan in compliance with the Accessible Canada Act.

1. Employment

Activities to increase the representation of persons with disabilities at the Agency included outreach, staffing, onboarding, career advancement, and retention. The activities aimed to:

- remove barriers and promote inclusive and accessible human resources practices at all stages of the employment cycle; and

- ensure that all employees, including persons with disabilities, are supported and able to contribute fully to the organization.

To meet these objectives, the Agency undertook the actions described below:

1.1 Developed a targeted national outreach and staffing approach

To streamline processes and increase representation, the Agency developed a targeted national outreach and staffing approach in the form of two main initiatives.

1.1.1 Outreach to organizations that serve persons with disabilities to share employment opportunities at the Agency and provide accommodations when needed

Progress:

Over the last year, the Staffing team partnered with organizations serving persons with disabilities to promote Agency employment opportunities. Recruitment partners currently include:

- [Accessible Navigation to Employment](#), a national training program dedicated to improving the foundational and transferable skills of hard-of-hearing and deaf Canadians;
- [Employment Accessibility Resource Network](#), a United Way initiative that brings together employers and service providers with the goal of increasing opportunities for meaningful employment for people with disabilities; and
- [LiveWorkPlay](#), an organization that helps the Ottawa community welcome and include people with intellectual disabilities, autistic persons (some of whom are not identified with having an intellectual disability) and individuals with a dual diagnosis (a mental health issue as well as an intellectual disability and/or autism).

In addition, members of the Managers and Supervisors Network attended a seminar given by LiveWorkPlay to learn more about services and support available. The Agency also participated in the David C. Onley recruitment event for persons with disabilities co-hosted by the Public Service Commission, La Cité, Carleton University, University of Ottawa, and Algonquin College. Outreach efforts continue to grow as a more comprehensive engagement strategy is implemented.

1.1.2 Promote inclusive staffing best practices for recruiting persons with disabilities in the online repository for hiring managers and the Staffing Team

Progress:

For National AccessAbility Week 2023, the [Discover Ability Network](#) facilitated a workshop on Disclosure and Accommodation hosted by the EEDI team. The workshop centered on ways to promote disclosure and facilitate accommodation for applicants and employees through workplace adjustments. Promoting best practices for inclusive staffing and supporting managers in this regard is ongoing. In accordance with the Agency's Delegation Authority Instrument, [Inclusive Hiring Practices for a Diverse Workforce](#) is now a mandatory training for sub-delegated managers at all levels. In addition, the Agency conducted in-house workshops for its staffing advisors to promote and operationalize inclusivity best practices. Staffing advisors and managers also attended a training session on implementing recent amendments to the [Public Service Employment Act](#).

To bolster recruitment, the Agency leveraged federal programs and promoted the use of its existing pool of qualified persons with disabilities, including candidates for the [Public Service Commission's Students with Disabilities Program](#). It also launched a targeted recruitment approach through non-advertised appointments and the Discover Ability Network.

Following consultations with the Agency's Accessibility Network, the EEDI team and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee are collaborating to develop the Accessibility Corner, an intranet web page that will store in one place internal and external accessibility-related tools, resources, and training for Agency staff. This repository is scheduled to launch by March 2024.

1.2 Ensure that the Agency's onboarding, retention and performance approach supports persons with disabilities

The Agency's onboarding, retention, and performance approach supports persons with disabilities to fully integrate into their work roles through the three activities outlined below.

1.2.1 Promote the modernized self-identification questionnaire in a way that encourages staff to self-identify

Progress:

The Agency will launch the new self-identification questionnaire developed by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) as soon as it is available. The questionnaire will be a valuable tool for monitoring the Agency's progress on meeting its recruitment and retention targets for persons with disabilities. In the meantime, the EEDI team attends bi-weekly meetings with TBS's Self-Identification team to keep updated on the process and best practices. As directed by TBS, when the questionnaire launches, the goal for employee self identification is to achieve a 90% response rate with an 80% completion rate within the first two months of publication.

1.2.2 Add accessibility resources to the online repository for managers to provide support for onboard persons with disabilities

Progress:

As mentioned in section 1.1.2., the EEDI team, in collaboration with the D&I Committee and the Accessibility Network, is actively working to develop the Accessibility Corner, an intranet repository containing internal and external accessibility-related tools and resources, as well as training recommendations. It will include a dedicated area for managers and launch by March 2024.

The Agency is organizing resources obtained through a preliminary search of both internal and external materials, which will inform how to structure the web page's content and identify areas requiring additional resources. The Agency is also updating its Onboarding Strategy to better facilitate information and resource-sharing with managers.

1.2.3 Tailor performance appraisal mechanisms to accommodate employees with disabilities within the parameters set by the Performance Management Program

Progress:

Discussions on customizing performance appraisal mechanisms are ongoing between the Human Resources division and senior management. The topic has been a consistent point of conversation at EEDI team and the Accessibility Network meetings. The Agency will be developing a concrete plan to tackle this item by end of 2024-25.

1.3 Leverage existing career advancement supports to persons with disabilities

Progress:

The Agency is using a variety of internal resources (e.g., a career mobility tool, internal job postings) to support persons with disabilities in acquiring the skills they need to advance their careers. In addition, the Staffing team is using the latest representation data issued from our internal human

resource information system to adjust individual recruitment strategies based on current and/or projected gaps.

2. Built environment

An accessible built environment refers to a building or a location that is spatially designed to be an inclusive space for people with disabilities. The Agency's objective is to enhance accessibility while at the same time considering the projected impacts of the hybrid work model.

2.1 Ensure all the Agency offices across Canada are accessible

The Agency is ensuring that all its offices across the country are accessible through the four activities described below.

2.1.1 Review and identify areas in need of improvement in consultation with persons with disabilities (curbs, change in floor elevation, elevators, open-concept buildings, accessibility parking options, etc.)

Progress:

The Security and Facilities team and the Occupational Health and Safety team works with Agency employees to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements and meeting the needs of employees on a case-by-case basis by considering each situation individually, considering the principles of Duty to Accommodate. The Security and Facilities team applies the accessibility requirements outlined in the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations and appendices to the *Canada Labour Code*. The Occupational Health and Safety team conducts reviews to identify potential hazards and assess the effectiveness of current mitigation measures, through regular inspections from Occupational and Safety Committees across all our offices. Regional offices make changes to address emerging barriers based on their team's needs. Among the elements under review are such things as curbs or uneven floor surfaces, ensuring appropriate-sized ramps and accessible entrances, elevators, washrooms, parking options.

2.1.2 Develop an Accessibility Checklist

Progress:

The EEDI team and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee are creating an accessibility checklist set to launch by the end of this fiscal year. At present, the working group is collecting resources and consulting guides from other federal government departments to ensure the Agency's checklist is comprehensive and the organization is cohesive in its practices.

2.1.3 Review and update the Agency's Emergency Evacuation Plan by involving persons with disabilities in the process and practice drills for evacuation

Progress:

The Agency is working with a third-party in reviewing its emergency evacuation procedures and practice drills to ensure that they meet all necessary health and safety requirements. A report is expected early 2024, which will inform evacuation procedures and a communications plan to increase employee awareness and available support services. In addition, the Agency will increase availability of First Aid Attendants and Floor Emergency Officers in 2024-25 by training additional employees.

2.1.4 Include accessibility clauses and standards within leases and future service contracts for managing large facilities

Progress:

Public Service and Procurement Canada manages leases and crown-owned spaces, and its Client Accommodation Service Advisors (CASAs) negotiate with landlords on the Agency's behalf to ensure compliance with building accessibility standards and requirements. Currently, on behalf of the Agency, CASAs are in negotiations with a number of landlords for regional office space.

For their part, the Agency's Security and Facilities team manages the organization's office spaces under lease agreement, and ensures employees are appropriately accommodated and offered accessible work environments.

Notably, all of these Agency practices are continuously evolving to accommodate the needs that come with its expansion.

2.2 Ensure all employees are aware of the accessibility features of their offices and the supports available to them

This measure is being implemented through the two activities outlined below:

2.2.1 Compile and communicate to employees the accessibility features of each Agency office through our intranet site

Progress:

The EEDI team is in discussions with the Occupational Health and Safety team with a view to compile a comprehensive list of the accessibility features and available support at all Agency locations. The team will then engage with the Security and Facilities team to conduct a similar assessment. Collected information will be posted on the Agency's intranet site in the upcoming Accessibility Corner web page by March 2024 and updated as required.

2.2.2 Add Independent Emergency Plan to the Accessibility Passport so that the needs of employees requiring accommodations are adequately addressed in cases of emergency

Progress:

The EEDI team will lead consultations on creating a communications strategy to encourage employees to share their Independent Emergency Plan with their supervisor and/or manager by appending it to their Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport (the Accessibility Passport). Implemented by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the Accessibility Passport was introduced at the Agency with the launch of the Accessibility Plan.) The overall goal is to raise awareness among managers and their staff about the accessibility requirements of individual employees in emergency and non-emergency situations.

3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Information and communication technologies pertain to the hardware and software support employees require in their work. The Agency's accessibility objectives in this area are to ensure the timely processing of accommodation requests, augment the accessibility of tools developed internally, and emphasize accessibility considerations when updating software.

3.1 Remove internal bottlenecks in the accommodation process and assess emerging barriers

Progress:

The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport is now extensively used within the Agency's processes. While some barriers still exist in the request for accommodation process, the Agency is working with stakeholders to identify solutions. In 2024-25, the Agency is prioritizing the streamlining and integration of all internal corporate processes, including requests for accommodation.

3.2 Conduct an accessibility assessment of current in-house tools

Progress:

The Information and Technology team is developing a strategy to evaluate the accessibility of current in-house tools. The goal is to develop recommendations for corrective measures that will be included in the digital plans for the coming years.

3.3 Ensure the accessibility of content, applications developed in-house, software procured in addition to the implementation of the upcoming accessibility standard

Progress:

The Information and Technology team has established a process for auditing web content and formatting it to the standards required by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. To make internal and external digital platforms more accessible, the team is setting up a Centre of

Expertise on Accessibility (a11y) and developing an Agency strategy to implement the forthcoming Standard for Information and Communication Technology Products and Services (winter 2024). To ensure the strategy is relevant to the Agency's work and implemented in a timely manner, the team will engage with stakeholders, employees and partners according to the values of "Nothing About Us Without Us"—a slogan adopted by the International Disability Caucus during negotiations for the United Nations Human Rights Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities. The crux of this message is that disability rights should not be created without including the voices of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

4. Communication, other than ICT

The use of language, the platforms used to communicate, and the way information is presented and/or accessed make up this category. Agency objectives are to:

- improve the availability of accessibility information, tools, and resources;
- support managers, supervisors and employees in addressing concerns related to documentation;
- enable and encourage employees to create accessible documents written in plain language.

4.1 Mandatory training to build employee capacity to write in plain language and create accessible documents

Progress:

For 2023-24, accessibility training was mandatory for all Agency employees. A variety of courses were proposed, including Making Documents Accessible. The EEDI team, in collaboration with the Communications division, also offered optional training in plain language writing. Although not part of mandatory training, the EEDI hosted the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion for a workshop on inclusive communications, which included plain language.

4.2 Dedicate an intranet page for resources, tools and training on accessibility

Progress:

As outlined in sections 1.1.2. and 1.2.2., the EEDI team is collaborating with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and consulting with the Accessibility Network to establish the Accessibility Corner, an accessibility-related resource repository for the Agency's intranet site. Scheduled for publication by the end of the fiscal year, it aims to assist employees and managers in implementing best practices. Alongside resources, the Accessibility Corner will feature tools and recommended training.

5. The procurement of goods, services and facilities

Procurement refers to the purchase of tools and equipment that are essential for persons with disabilities to perform well in their roles. The Agency's objective in this area is to streamline the procurement process for essential tools and equipment to minimize or avoid delays caused by internal factors.

5.1 Regular review of the procurement process

Progress:

The Agency's Procurement team minimized delays by assessing accommodation requests on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions designated by Shared Services Canada (SSC) based on time-sensitivity or technical concerns were put in place at the Agency to expedite the delivery of specialized tools (e.g., software that converts speech to text). Early 2024, the team will attend a series of SSC training sessions on Procuring Accessible Information and Communication Technology to provide them with the latest guidance on accessibility best practices.

In addition, the Procurement team continues to assess accessibility requirements as the first step in all competitive procurement processes. They are working with clients to ensure that accessibility standards and criteria are included in all proposals for external consulting needs.

6. The design and delivery of programs and services

This section sets out the Agency's strategic vision for accessibility across the organization and how best to implement a results-based approach for tackling accessibility barriers. Strategies include establishing targets, systems reviews, budgetary requirements, and consistent engagement with persons with disabilities to ensure that accessibility is a key consideration in determining the design and delivery of programs and services.

6.1 Establish a Persons with disabilities network

Progress:

The Agency has established the Accessibility Network, an open consultation group that focuses on increasing accessibility, supporting persons with disabilities, promoting awareness, advocating for rights, and building an inclusive workplace community. Guidelines emphasize inclusivity, respect, confidentiality and encouraging open dialogue among its members.

Membership is voluntary and the Network welcomes all Agency staff who identify as having a disability or who support disability inclusion. Members offer advice and recommendations on accessibility plan development and provide insights on potential barriers. They may also support the EEDI team initiatives, including maintaining the upcoming Accessibility Corner. The Accessibility Network includes

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a spokesperson, a rotating roster for representation at events and the EEDI team, which chairs meetings, manages logistics, and liaises with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Network meets 6 to 12 times a year, on a consensus-established schedule. It is the focal point for consultations on the Agency's accessibility initiatives and for identifying existing and emerging barriers.

6.2 Develop and adopt accessibility guide

Progress:

In 2026, Accessibility Standards Canada will release its Standard for the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services. The standard will identify barriers related to: program and service costs, policies lacking accessibility considerations, attitudinal challenges, accessibility of technology, information and customer services, inclusive design for buildings and outdoor spaces, and effective communication with service providers. Once the standard is published, the Agency will develop an accessibility guide to align with the standard.

Until the Standard for the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services is released, the EEDI team, the Accessibility Network, and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee will use the Accessibility Corner intranet page to centralize all resources, tools and training materials on workplace accessibility. A sub-committee of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee was created to work on this and is currently gathering and organizing content for publication by March 2024.

6.3 Use a data-driven approach to derive targets and identify and overcome barriers to accessibility

There are three prongs to this data-driven approach.

6.3.1 Develop hiring targets for persons with disabilities subject regional workforce availability to ensure higher representation and create accountability to fill gaps

Progress:

The Agency has established a hiring target for persons with disabilities that is one percent (1%) higher than Statistics Canada's most recently published workforce hiring data figures (subject to regional workforce availability). Every quarter, the EEDI team creates dashboards on employment equity representation and shares these with Agency management and the Staffing team, who use these to identify gaps that need to be addressed and measure progress over time.

6.3.2 Conduct multi-year analysis at all stages of the employment cycle to identify and address persistent barriers

Progress:

The EEDI team is collaborating with stakeholders to create a multi-year strategy for gathering and analysing employment equity data at all stages of the employment cycle to identify and better address persistent barriers.

6.3.3 Conduct an employment systems review to understand challenges surrounding representation and address them through actions in the Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Progress:

An initial review of Human Resources information systems has been completed and stakeholder consultations will begin in 2024. The goal of this effort is to better understand the challenges surrounding representation and how these can be addressed through actions in the Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

6.4 Centralize resources and dedicate a cost center

Progress:

As of the date of this report, accommodation requests are being approved and processed through the Agency's various cost centers. Work is underway to structure the identification, recording, and reporting of costs through one centralized cost centre dedicated to accommodation requests. It is expected to be operational for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

7. Transportation

At the time of the Accessibility Plan's publication in December 2022, the Agency had only recently introduced the hybrid work model, and at that time no related barriers had been reported.

Consultations since then have identified two barriers faced by employees:

- long commutes that extend the workday; and
- hybrid work arrangements that could affect the safe travel of persons with disabilities.

The Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team will work with the relevant teams to develop action items for addressing these barriers.

8. Culture

Culture implies an environment based on awareness, inclusivity, and belonging that enables persons with disabilities to achieve full integration, acceptance, and participation in society. The Agency's overall objective in this area is to foster an inclusive and respectful workplace culture by creating awareness and learning activities.

8.1 Promote learning tools and raise awareness

The Agency is promoting learning tools and raising awareness of the importance of accessibility and inclusion for staff and management through four branches of activity.

8.1.1 Run internal communication campaigns throughout the year to raise awareness of accessibility resources to all employees

Progress:

The EEDI team worked collaboratively with the Internal Communications team to orchestrate internal campaigns throughout the year aimed at promoting accessibility initiatives and resources to all Agency employees. Campaigns focused on raising awareness of the Accessibility Hub (Office of Public Service Accessibility), the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport, and accessibility-focused training programs (Canada School of Public Service). Information, including relevant links, was disseminated through internal newsletters, namely News@IAAC and HR Impact.

8.1.2 Offer workshops and training for managers on disability management, accessibility, inclusion and duty to accommodate

Progress:

For 2023-24, accessibility training became part of the mandatory training required for all Agency employees. The course selection included Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility, Disability Management and Workplace Wellness, and Making Documents Accessible.

The EEDI team also organized two workshops/training sessions in 2023 focused on accessibility topics. The spring session, led by the Discover Ability Network, focused on disclosure and accommodation. The fall session delved into the look, feel and sound of EEDI work. Participants heard the stories of individuals with disabilities who made meaningful contributions to their workplaces by overcoming participation barriers together with their employers. Communications division promoted the events through intranet posts, all-staff calendar invitations, and reminders in the internal newsletter.

8.1.3 Create an online repository of tools, resources and training that support supervisors and managers in nurturing inclusivity within their teams, creating a safe environment for conversations around disability and handling of accommodation requests

Progress:

As reported in sections 1.1.2., 1.2.2, and 4.2, the EEDI team, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Accessibility Network are currently developing the Accessibility Corner, an internal online collection of tools, resources, and training. In part, this initiative is designed to better support supervisors and managers in nurturing inclusivity within their teams, creating safe environments for conversations around disability, and handling accommodation requests. The goal is to have the Accessibility Corner on the Agency's intranet site by the end of the 2023-24, and the working group is on track to meet this schedule.

8.1.4 Encourage staff to take part in the following accessibility training offered by the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS):

- [Addressing Disability and Barriers to Accessibility (INC115)](#)
- [Disability Management and Workplace Wellness (INC120)](#)
- Understanding Unconscious Bias (INC105)
- [Video: Making Documents Accessible (INC1-V46)](#)

Progress:

During 2023-24, employees were required to take at least one training course related to each of four Agency's priorities, one of which is accessibility. Following consultations with the EEDI team, the Learning, Training and Development team selected the above-mentioned courses to be eligible for meeting the accessibility requirement.

8.2 Support persons with disabilities

Actions to support persons with disabilities at the Agency were taken through the following two activities:

8.2.1 Mobilize constructive dialogue to harness and advance accessibility issues and concerns to the Agency's senior management

Progress:

Since the Accessibility Plan's implementation in December 2022, the Diversity and Inclusion co-champions have engaged in constructive dialogue with senior management to identify and address accessibility issues and concerns in three significant ways.

First, the co-champions discussed diversity and inclusion priorities with the Agency President emphasizing the importance of implementing the Plan.

Second, the co-champions engaged with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee in identifying two priorities for the Accessibility Plan's implementation:

- to develop and adopt an accessibility guide with best practices and considerations in designing and delivering programs and services; and
- to create an accessibility checklist containing the essential actions to be taken to make internal and external meetings accessible.

The co-champions led monthly meetings with the Committee to review the progress made, challenges that may arise, and possible solutions. They provided a quarterly summary of these conversations to the Agency President and senior managers responsible for corporate committees.

Third, the co-champions presented the Committee's Accessibility Plan priorities to various teams and senior management, which provided additional opportunities for discussion.

8.2.2 Leverage the Network and our intranet site to promote resources available to employees with disabilities concerns wellness, mental health, counselling, conflict management and other supports.

Progress:

As reported in section 1.1.2., 1.22., 4.2 and 8.1.3., the Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and Accessibility Network are actively working to create an Accessibility Corner on the Agency's intranet site. It will house tools, resources, and training on wellness, mental health, counselling, and conflict management, among other topics. The web page is slated for posting on the intranet by the end of March 2024. At present, the work is progressing on schedule to meet the deadline.

Consultations

In preparation of this report, the EEDI team consulted with the Agency's Accessibility Network. Among the topics discussed were new barriers discovered since the Accessibility Plan was drafted as well as possible ways for gathering and analysing new data. As a result, the EEDI team and the Accessibility Network created and distributed a Progress Survey to gather and analyse new data and compare it to the findings of the initial survey undertaken to develop the Plan.

During consultations on the Progress Survey, concerns were raised about the accessibility of its text formatting. The Survey's scope was also discussed, and questions arose about whether it was meeting its objectives to gain insight into enhancing accessibility within the public service and making the Agency a more accessible employer. The feedback led to improved text formatting and expanding the survey to include additional questions.

The Progress Survey was anonymous, conducted online and took about 20 minutes to complete. Notices about the Survey were emailed to all Agency employees and promoted through the News@IAAC newsletter. 53 people participated, representing 11% of employees. Nearly half the respondents (45%) identified as persons with one or more disabilities within the following range of categories: mental health (44%), chronic pain (38%), mobility, flexibility or dexterity (31%), learning (31%), hearing (13%), vision or seeing (13%), and unspecified others.

Results

The Progress Survey offered new insight into the diversity of perspectives and experiences among Agency employees, both on its own and in comparison, with the Plan Survey. For the purposes of this report, the results are organized into themes, and unless otherwise specified, refer to those of the Progress Survey. To avoid generalizing for all employees, it should be noted that the results apply to those who responded to the Surveys.

Workspace accessibility

- There was an increase in the percentage of respondents who rated the Agency's buildings as very accessible and completely accessible; no respondents in either survey rated the buildings as not at all accessible.
- All respondents indicated that virtual meetings are at least somewhat accessible, with 28% rating them as very accessible and 53% rating them as completely accessible.

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Training and cultural change

- Respondents chose special events and mandatory training (particularly for supervisors and managers) as the most effective way to increase awareness about accessibility.

- The topics respondents are most eager to learn about are accommodations (71%), unconscious bias (70%), inclusion (57%), and accessible documents (51%).

Communication and awareness of accessibility support

- 77% of the respondents agreed that the Agency's communication products are plain language compliant, and more than half reported consciously using plain language in their written communications.

- More respondents described being somewhat aware or very aware of their unit's or region's accessibility features, services, and support compared to the Plan Survey.

Accommodation

- Equipment/tools and support measures remained the most commonly requested types of accommodation.

- The high rate of satisfaction for equipment/tools accommodation increased by over 8%.

- There was no significant difference in the rate of denied accommodation requests between the two surveys, however, there was a slight decrease (around 7%) in accepted accommodation requests.

- Respondents were divergent in rating support measure accommodations: on the one hand, 29% reported being very satisfied with them; on the other hand, 15% reported feeling very dissatisfied.

Barriers identified

- Fewer respondents reported having personally experienced or witnessed someone facing systemic (37.50% in 2022 versus 28.30% in 2023), attitudinal (39.06% in 2022 versus 30.19% in 2023), or physical/architectural barriers (29.69% in 2022 versus 26.42% in 2023); however, more respondents reported communication information-related and communication (21.88% in 2022 versus 24.53% in 2023) and technological (25% in 2022 versus 26.42% in 2023) barriers.

- Most respondents (85%) reported being comfortable talking with their current supervisor or manager about the barriers they face or observe, and a significant number have already done so (37%).

- Respondents reported that more than any other aspect of their job, completing routine tasks was the most challenging (note that because this survey question was not in the Plan Survey, comparative data is unavailable).

- An increased number of respondents (28 in 2022 versus 31 in 2023) reported having faced barriers or witnessed others face barriers during staffing processes.

Public Service Employee Survey

Results from the Public Service Employee Survey validate the feedback received on the accommodation process. Agency employees reported experiencing lower impacts of accessibility and accommodation issues on career advancement, compared to employees of the federal public service as a whole. Nevertheless, a higher proportion of Agency employees reported experiencing a significant degree of work-related stress attributable to these factors. The Public Service Employee Survey results have since been incorporated into the Human Resources Strategic Plan.

Feedback

Feedback received on the implementation of the Accessibility Plan fell within three broad themes:

- requests for additional information concerning certain items in the Plan; and
- questions regarding the Plan's development and implementation processes; and
- identification of new barriers.

Requests for additional information

Requests for additional information primarily revolved around access to employment equity data and its dissemination to employees beyond the Human Resources division. There was also interest in accessing the list of the organizations serving individuals with disabilities that have been, or will be, contacted to promote employment opportunities at the Agency. In response, the EEDI team is creating a strategy to increase data sharing.

Questions about the Agency's development and implementation of the Plan

The Agency has received questions about the extent of union involvement in the development of the Plan and details of the accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure that the Plan's goals are met. In response, the EEDI team is compiling information on union involvement and restructuring the Plan's implementation management system to improve the accountability mechanism in 2024 and facilitate the flow of information between stakeholders.

New barriers identified

Newly identified barriers to accessibility are linked to:

- ongoing delays in the accommodation process;
- inadequate consideration of the impacts of seasonal variations on disabilities;
- insufficient sick leave provisions among employees with disabilities;

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- the burden of transporting laptops and other equipment between the office; and home for hybrid work purposes.

In response, the EEDI team has relayed the information to the relevant teams, and updates are pending.

As part of the Agency's commitment to transparency and responsiveness, it is diligently assessing all feedback received. Appropriate actions and/or considerations will be integrated into future planning and reporting, as necessary. All input is highly valued, and the Agency appreciates the many contributions to its ongoing efforts to improve accessibility.