



Infrastructure  
Canada

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# 2023 Progress Report on INFC's Accessibility Plan

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Canada 

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# General

## How to order alternate formats

To request a copy of this progress report or the description of INFC's feedback process in an alternate format (for example, print, large print, braille or audio), please send your request to:

Infrastructure Canada  
Communications Branch  
180 Kent Street, Suite 1100  
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B6

National info line: 613-948-1148  
Toll-free: 1-877-250-7154  
TTY: 1-800-465-7735  
Email: [info@infc.gc.ca](mailto:info@infc.gc.ca)

## How to submit your feedback

The Accessibility Hub at INFC is responsible for overseeing feedback on the progress report on behalf of the Department. Feedback on this progress report can be sent to:

Infrastructure Canada  
Director, Accessibility Hub  
180 Kent Street, Suite 1100  
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B6

National info line: 613-948-1148  
Toll-free: 1-877-250-7154  
TTY: 1-800-465-7735  
Email: [accessibility-accessibilite@infc.gc.ca](mailto:accessibility-accessibilite@infc.gc.ca)

To provide anonymous feedback, please use the [Accessibility Feedback Form](#).

Receipt of acknowledgement will be provided within two weeks of its successful delivery and will be provided by the same feedback channel in which it was received. All feedback will be taken into consideration during the publication of progress reports and in the triennial renewal of the Plan. Each submission will be retained in electronic or print form for a period of at least seven years after receipt of acknowledgement.

## Executive summary

Infrastructure Canada (INFC) is pleased to report on the progress made over the past year to address barriers to accessibility that were identified in [INFC's Accessibility Plan 2023–2025](#) (the Plan).

The progress report showcases some of the measures that have been taken or are underway to remove barriers in the areas of:

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

The status of each measure is specified. The “in progress” status is used for measures that will be completed shortly, while the “ongoing” status means the measure is longer-term and will continue to evolve over time, possibly beyond the timeframe identified by the Plan.

The Plan identified the creation of a new centre of expertise for accessibility as the highest priority. In Spring 2023, the Department launched its first Accessibility Hub (the Hub) to provide employees with disabilities and managers with guidance, support, and resources for temporary, episodic and/or permanent disabilities.

The Hub collaborates with other key partners within INFC and with other federal departments to address and remove barriers to accessibility for both employees and members of the public.

INFC's work is guided by the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) and its regulations. It is also aligned with the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#)—with a goal of hiring no less than 5,000 persons with disabilities by 2025—and supports the Clerk of the Privy Council's 2023 [Call to Action Forward Direction](#) on anti-racism, equity and inclusion in the federal public service

## Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2023 Progress Report on Infrastructure Canada's Accessibility Plan. This report highlights our Department's collective efforts to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Over the past year, we have made great strides towards creating a more inclusive and accessible workplace and removing barriers to better serve Canadians and communities across the country.

The Accessibility Hub, along with key partners across the Department, has been working towards a common goal of increasing accessibility for all. Notable progress was made with the creation of an Accessibility Testers Group, the launch of various working groups to accelerate change, and significant promotion and awareness efforts. We can be proud of these initiatives.

However, there is still much to be done. There are a number of barriers that need to be addressed and measures to be taken. Some of these measures may take longer to implement, while others can be actioned sooner. The approach to accommodations, the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities, self-identification and the tracking of accessibility measures are examples of areas that need improvement and we are working diligently to address these gaps.

It is only through our collective efforts that we can truly achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040 and build a more equitable and inclusive public service.

Kelly Gillis  
Deputy Minister  
Infrastructure and Communities



# Creation of INFC’s Accessibility Hub

## Priority Action 1: Build a centre of expertise for accessibility at INFC, as a partner for priority areas and to coordinate/fund accommodations

INFC’s Accessibility Plan 2023–2025 (the Plan) identified the creation of a new centre of expertise for accessibility as the highest priority to help address all barriers, including Barrier 1.1 “Lack of a centralized fund and coordination for workplace accommodation”.

INFC’s Accessibility Hub was created in March 2023. Its official launch took place on May 31, 2023, during National AccessAbility Week. The virtual launch welcomed over 300 employees across the Department, which represents approximately 20% of INFC’s employees.

The main purpose of the Hub is to advocate for accessibility and provide employees with disabilities and managers with support, guidance and resources.

### Collaborating with key partners to remove barriers to accessibility

INFC’s Accessibility Hub has created several working groups to bring together key partners from across the Department to help advance priorities identified in [INFC’s Accessibility Plan 2023–2025](#).

Members of these working groups include functional specialists as well as employees with disabilities. The working groups provided members with the opportunity to share their lived experiences and provide valuable input to develop meaningful and concrete measures to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Three working groups are currently operational:

- 1) The **Accessible Content and Templates** working group focusses on updating corporate templates and other products and tools to help ensure that content is fully accessible to all audiences. This working group helps to address barriers identified in the following areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*:
  - Area 3—Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)
  - Area 4—Communications other than Information and Communication Technologies
  - Area 6—Design and delivery of programs and services
- 2) The **Employment of Persons with Disabilities** working group focusses on the recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities to help increase their representation at INFC and within the federal public service. This working group helps to address barriers identified in the following area of the *Accessible Canada Act*:
  - Area 1—Employment

- 3) The **Accessible Programs and Policies** working group focusses on leveraging INFC's policies and programs—from design to delivery—to advance the objectives of the *Accessible Canada Act* in communities across Canada. This working group helps to address barriers identified in the following areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*:
- Area 6—Design and delivery of programs and services
  - Area 7—Transportation

Although the existing working groups touch on aspects relevant to all key areas of the Act, there may be other working groups created, as needed, to address specific areas or measures.

### Equipping employees and managers with tools and resources

In the summer of 2023, the Hub launched its revamped intranet presence. The latest web content offers guidance to employees needing accessibility support and managers supporting employees with accessibility needs. The updates also provide more tools and best practices on accessibility, quick links, as well as information on upcoming learning events.

Throughout the year, there were five info-sessions and over 40 requests for policy advice or one-on-one coaching sessions offered to employees across the Department to help raise awareness and promote best practices, notably on why accessibility matters and how to create accessible content.

In addition, 20 articles were published in the weekly employee newsletter to help promote new tools, info-sessions or training offered by INFC and other providers, and to raise awareness on accessibility issues.

As subject-matter experts, members of the Hub continue to expand and share their knowledge and expertise to further support employees and managers and raise overall awareness on accessibility.

### Coordinating accommodation requests

Prior to the creation of the Hub, employees with accommodation needs would turn to their manager, Human Resources, Accommodations, or another group they trusted to make their request. These persons were then responsible for coordinating with the various teams involved in fulfilling the request (for example, Labour Relations, Health and Safety, Information Technology).

Employees and management shared their concerns pertaining to this approach, including:

- a lack of clarity on who is responsible for covering the costs of accommodations (for example, equipment and tools)

- inconsistencies in tracking accommodation and accessibility requests (who is responsible for what?)

Since its creation, the Hub is gradually becoming the new first point of contact to initiate accommodation requests. It also had initial discussions to develop an integrated approach to accommodations with regards to persons with disabilities that clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of all parties and that is consistently applied across the Department.

# Employment

## Priority Action 2: Pursue the recruitment of persons with disabilities to meet Workforce Availability targets by 2025

Progress has been made in 2023 to increase the representation of employees with disabilities at INFC. As of September 30, 2023, employees with disabilities represent 7.1%<sup>1</sup> of the Department's workforce (compared to 6.5% as of December 31, 2022). There is still work to be done to meet the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) target of 8.6% for INFC.

The following actions were identified to address Barrier 1.2 "Representation gap of persons with disabilities".

### Employment Equity Self-identification campaign

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

From 2020 to 2022, a self-identification campaign was held at INFC to encourage employees to self-identify as having a disability. Emails were distributed, providing information on the benefits of self-identifying, examples of how self-identifying has improved initiatives within the organization and how it can help in the future. The messages also provided links and forms to make it easier for employees to self-identify and information on whom to contact with questions or concerns.

TBS is now working on the Modernized Self-Identification Questionnaire (see below).

### Recruitment measures taken to prioritize hiring persons with disabilities

Status: Ongoing

The Department continues to create fully qualified pools of candidates for hiring managers. All three of the collective staffing processes launched at INFC in 2023 are prioritizing the assessment of candidates who self-identify as belonging to an under-represented employment equity group, including persons with disabilities.

INFC also continues to promote bilingual non-imperative appointments as an option for staffing processes where employment equity is invoked as an organizational need.

INFC continues to attend career and student job fairs and to highlight the importance of self-identification. However, during our discussions with participants at these career events, we heard from several persons with disabilities that they prefer to attend events that are open to everyone, as opposed to employment equity-specific events. This reinforces the need for the public service to ensure that all events are accessible.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on INFC Employment Equity data, which includes indeterminate and term employees, including employees on secondment/interchange out.

In May 2023, Accessibility Hub and Human Resources representatives attended Employment and Social Development Canada's Virtual Career Fair and circulated information from potential candidates to INFC managers. We acknowledge that there is little to no data available at this time to confirm whether any persons with disabilities were hired from these career fairs and/or selection pools.

The Hub is committed to working with Human Resources and management in 2024 to raise awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. It is also committed to working with Human Resources to develop better tracking and data gathering mechanisms to properly account for trends about the hiring of persons with disabilities.

### Target hiring of students with disabilities

Status: Ongoing

INFC created a new Human Resources team responsible for creating and promoting networking opportunities for students who identify as persons with disabilities. Additionally, this team is responsible for developing relationships with community organizations supporting their recruitment.

INFC also continues to participate in the Federal Employment Strategy Group meetings hosted by [LiveWorkPlay](#), an Ottawa-based organization focused on helping the community welcome and include people with intellectual disabilities, autistic persons, and individuals with a dual diagnosis to live, work, and play as valued citizens.

The Human Resources team is exploring the opportunity to work with Canadian universities to share best practices on accommodations and accessibility and learn more about the needs of students with disabilities.

Community organizations, such as LiveWorkPlay, are being invited to share best practices with INFC human resources specialists and increase their knowledge of bias and accommodations.

### Employment Systems Review

Status: In progress

INFC is conducting its first Employment Systems Review (ESR) under the [Employment Equity Act](#). An ESR identifies and examines barriers that disadvantage the following groups in employment and undermines their participation in the workplace:

- Women
- Indigenous Peoples
- Members of visible minorities
- Persons with disabilities
- Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

## Modernized Self-Identification Questionnaire

Status: In progress

Once TBS launches its new modernized Self-Identification Questionnaire, INFC will organize info-sessions for employees and managers.

## Barrier 1.3: Emotional labour of self-advocacy and providing proof of disability

Adopting accessible and inclusive employment approaches and strategies is a priority at INFC. The Employment of Persons with Disabilities working group is exploring barriers 1.1 and 1.2, described above, as well as barriers 1.3 to 1.7, described below, to:

- implement solutions identified in the Plan
- find innovative solutions to increase the representation and improve the retention of employees with disabilities at INFC

## The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport

### **Promote and offer info-sessions on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport to employees and managers**

Status: Ongoing

The Government of Canada Workplace Accessible Passport (the Passport) is a tool to support an inclusive work environment in the federal public service. It simplifies the workplace accommodation process by focussing on three key elements:

- describing the workplace situations
- identifying the barriers to accessibility
- putting in place solutions (for example, accommodations measures, assistive technology, other services)

As one of the early adopters in the federal public service, INFC has been promoting and encouraging the use of the Passport. However, it is up to the employee to choose to use the Passport. We have heard during consultations that implementation of the Passport is not consistently being applied. The Hub intends to work with management across the Department to support the use of the Passport. The Hub provides advice and support to employees who may wish to use it, as well as their managers.

TBS is in the process of updating the Passport. The Hub and the Communications team will promote new material, guidelines, or tools when available through the weekly employee newsletter, intranet, and info-sessions.

Finally, the Hub participated in a train-the-trainer session led by TBS and will be able to offer future training sessions to INFC employees.

## Recruitment measures taken to lessen the emotional labour of self-advocacy and providing proof of disability

Status: Ongoing

INFC is gradually making its collective staffing processes more flexible and inclusive. For example, a collective staffing process for the EC-07 level was undertaken with the following approach:

- assessing asset experience criteria later in the process, in a more accessible format (not at the initial application stage)
- updating candidate assessment materials and communications (for example, advertisements, instructions) to include more open and inclusive language
- for assessments (interviews and exams):
  - providing assessment material to candidates in advance
  - by default, allowing for flexibility in the format and other flexibilities as needed (such as alternate interview methods)

These flexible options offered to all candidates encourage persons with disabilities to engage and remain in the process, while also decreasing the number of accommodation requests or need to disclose personal information.

## Adapt practices based on amendments made to the *Public Service Employment Act* (new)

On July 1, 2023, two amendments to the *Public Service Employment Act* came into force. The [amendments](#) were some of several that were introduced to address biases and barriers that disadvantage people belonging to an equity-seeking group, including persons with disabilities.

The first change relates to assessment methods used in appointment processes. Before using an assessment method (for example, interviews, written exams), hiring managers must evaluate it and its application to identify biases and barriers. Managers must also take steps to remove biases and barriers or to mitigate their impact.

The second change relates to expanded investigation authorities of the Public Service Commission of Canada and deputy heads. Anyone may request an [investigation](#) to determine if a bias or barrier resulted in a disadvantage to people belonging to an equity-seeking group in an appointment process.

The amendments lay the foundation for more inclusive hiring practices, where all applicants can demonstrate their full potential. They advance a range of initiatives, including the [Clerk's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#), the [Many Voices One Mind](#) strategy, the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#), the [Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan 2022](#), and [Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy](#).

## **Evaluate the assessment methods to identify and reduce biases or barriers against persons with disabilities (new)**

Status: In progress

The Public Service Commission (PSC) developed a guide and a tool for human resources specialists and hiring managers. The guidance will help them to identify, remove or reduce any potential biases and barriers found in their assessment methods. The Deputy Minister shared an email with all INFC employees to raise awareness about the changes.

Using PSC's guidance, INFC is creating and implementing internal tools to support the use of assessment accommodations measures for candidates with disabilities in all advertised processes. This will ensure that accommodations can be provided in a fair and consistent manner and eliminate any undue hardship for candidates with disabilities.

The Department has also updated the screening board report document for advertised processes to improve the tracking of candidates requiring assessment accommodations measures. These updates also enable Human Resources to be more proactive in providing accommodations support throughout the process.

## **Conduct a pilot project to test new assessments methods (new)**

Status: In progress

In early 2024, Human Resources and the Accessibility Hub will launch a pilot project to test new assessment methods based on PSC's guidance. Impacts on the appointment process and on human resources employees (for example, workload) will also be taken into consideration in determining the best improvements to put in place.

## **Barrier 1.4: Limited interpretation of disability and how it manifests in the broader environment**

Creation of the Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion (AREI) Division and themed learning journeys by this team to raise awareness on Employment Equity groups, including persons with disabilities

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

The AREI Division was created in March 2021. It provides strategic advice, education and oversight through an intersectional and holistic approach based on collaboration with persons with disabilities, women, Indigenous persons, members of visible minorities, but also members of the Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Awareness through staffing advice



Covered in Barrier 1.3 under “Recruitment measures taken to lessen the emotional labour of self-advocacy and providing proof of disability”.

### Awareness through training and learning activities

Status: Ongoing

The Hub is actively promoting best practices, tools and resources, special events and learning opportunities on accessibility with staff through:

- digital communications and info-sessions/presentations
- one-on-one coaching

It has also promoted events such as:

- the National AccessAbility Week (May 28-June 3)
- the Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) in October
- the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3)

INFC employees can find a full list of tools and resources as well as training offerings on the Hub’s revamped intranet site. Information is also promoted via the employee weekly newsletter. To date, the most common topic has been on creating accessible content.

### Awareness through onboarding

Status: Completed in 2023

In Fall 2023, content relating to the Hub was added to INFC’s orientation package for new employees to raise awareness and provide contact information for employees who may have questions or require accommodation support.

## Barrier 1.5: Lack of community and sense of belonging for persons with disabilities

### Career development programs offering a sense of belonging and community for persons with disabilities

Covered under Barrier 1.6 “Limited opportunity and support for career progression”.

### Creation of the Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion Division

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

### Accessibility Committee, led by the Diversity and Inclusion Co-Champions

Status: Ongoing

In May 2023, a call out was sent to all employees to join INFC’s Persons with Disabilities Network, formerly called the Accessibility Committee, and membership is

still growing. Members of this employee-led network are participating in workplace accessibility projects and working groups.

The Chair of the Persons with Disabilities Network is participating in the Persons with Disabilities Champions and Chairs Committee (PwDCCC). The PwDCCC serves as a forum for networking and sharing of employment equity best practices among departments and agencies from across the Public Service of Canada.

The Persons with Disabilities Network and the Hub will continue to work hand in hand to ensure employees with disabilities feel safe to make their voices heard.

### Encourage employees to get involved in the accessibility community at INFC (new)

Status: Ongoing

We all have a role to play in making our workplace more accessible and inclusive. There are several initiatives underway at INFC where employees with lived experiences can get involved in the accessibility community.

The Hub's revamped intranet includes a section called "I want to get involved in the accessibility community at INFC," which provides a brief description of ways to get involved (for example, Accessibility testers group, Persons with Disabilities Network). Employees are also encouraged to contact the Hub if they have questions or need support.

## Barrier 1.6: Limited opportunity and support for career progression

As we look to help persons with disabilities fully participate in the workplace and support them in advancing their careers, there is a growing need to ensure that we are designing pathways for their training and development.

Career development programs are in place, which are specifically designed to support career progression for Employment Equity-deserving groups

Status: Ongoing

The Department continues to advance the career development programs described in the Plan:

- **INFC Talent Management Program:** The Human Resources team is revamping the program with the goal of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities, amongst others.

- **Mentorship Plus Program:** Feedback from sponsors and protégés of the first cohort of the program was positive. The second cohort is expected to launch early in 2024.
- **Mosaic Leadership Development Program:** The INFC employee that was nominated to TBS has been selected for the 2023–2024 cohort of the program. The Human Resources team continues to support the participant and the sponsor throughout the program.

In addition, the Talent Management and Sponsorship Programs working group was created in Fall 2023 in response to the Clerk’s [Call to Action Forward Direction](#) on anti-racism, equity and inclusion in the federal public service. In the spirit of co-creation, a department-wide call out was sent to recruit members from every level. The objective of the working group is to develop a meaningful set of actions to address the areas highlighted by the Clerk, which include career progression for employees with disabilities.

## Barrier 1.7: Increased risk of facing harassment and experiencing stress/anxiety on the job

As stated in the Plan, removing the unconscious biases and stigma around disability will take time and effort, but it is a crucial step that must be taken if we are to create a welcoming and inclusive space.

### Raise awareness via mandatory training

Status: In progress

Human Resources’ Talent Development team and the Hub continue to encourage employees to familiarize themselves with accessibility best practices.

### Monitor formal and informal complaints and grievances to identify trends and corrective measures

Status: Ongoing

The Department continues to monitor complaints and grievances via the Labour Relations team, exit questionnaires, results from the Public Service Employee Survey, and submissions made to the person designated for managing harassment complaints (also called “designated recipient”). Very few formal complaints were received and no trend with regards to accessibility was identified. The Hub is participating in intradepartmental meetings to stay informed of developments and to ensure that discussions include an accessibility lens:

- the weekly meeting on the hybrid workspace model
- the monthly Workplace Health and Safety Committee meetings

- the quarterly Health and Safety Policy Committee meetings

Engage in cyclical review of harassment policy to identify and address any gaps

Status: In progress

The Occupational Health and Safety team is reviewing the INFC Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy in consultation with key stakeholders (including the Hub). The review was launched in December 2023.

## Built environment

INFC's offices in Ottawa and Montreal are modern and designed with an open and collaborative workspace in mind. The Department has been mindful of accessibility needs when designing new spaces and will continue to do so as the Department expands its presence across Canada. Despite these efforts, individual needs are unique and may require creative thinking and innovative ways to ensure a barrier free and accessible workplace.

### Barrier 2.1: "One-size-fits-all" approach for designing post-pandemic offices and hybrid work plans

Work with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to continue improving workspaces

Status: Ongoing

The Accommodations team at INFC continues to work with PSPC to improve the design of in-office workspaces and continues to follow the Canadian building code on all projects. It is working with the Hub to address accommodations requests from new and existing employees.

Creation of the INFRAfuture Secretariat

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

The INFRAfuture Secretariat was launched in September 2021 as a specialized team aimed at helping our organization adapt through a period of considerable change during the pandemic. The role of the Secretariat has now been integrated into INFC's Transformation Branch.

Test INFC workplace accessibility with employees (new)

Status: Ongoing

INFC's Accessibility Testers Group was created in spring 2023 and consists of employees with lived experiences (for example, persons with physical, neurological, and learning disabilities) who have an opportunity to take part in making INFC an accessible, barrier-free workplace.

IT Services and Accommodations have consulted with industry experts and introduced some new design elements and technology in INFC boardrooms. A selection of temporary cameras, screens, sound equipment, and furniture configurations from different vendors was installed in seven meeting rooms of various sizes. Over the summer, six consultation sessions were organized. The group tested the equipment and shared their input on newly equipped boardrooms. IT Services is developing a business case to move forward with purchasing accessible equipment and furniture.

Also, the Hub and members of the Accessibility Testers Group had the opportunity to share their views on the configuration of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor at 180 Kent Street in Ottawa. As construction is completed on that floor, feedback is being taken into consideration in configuring workspaces on other floors.

### INFC's Adaptive Workspaces for Accessibility Pilot Project (new)

Status: In progress

INFC's Adaptive Workspaces for Accessibility Pilot Project helps employees who have more complex accommodations and accessibility requirements in an office environment. The Hub works with employees and their managers to determine their adaptive workspace needs. Employees having similar needs are assigned a workspace to be co-shared. As of September 30, 2023, 18 employees were accommodated with an adaptive workspace.

Comments received so far have been very positive. However, there have been a few cases where other employees would use these assigned workspaces and ergonomic equipment from employees participating in the pilot project. We have also heard that there is a stigma associated with the use of such spaces. For instance, some employees have shared that they have been told they are receiving special treatment by having access to an assigned workspace or closed office. The Hub is working on raising awareness across the Department to support workplace culture change.

## Barrier 2.2: Limited awareness of accessibility features in the physical workplace

### Information provided to employees

Status: Ongoing

A link to the Hub's generic mailbox was added under the key contacts section of the Hybrid Work @ INFC intranet page. Employees requiring accessibility support to adapt and work safely and effectively in a hybrid environment can easily connect with the Hub.

## Barrier 2.3: Adapting evacuation plans instead of including persons with disabilities at the design stage

Consult persons living with disabilities, update the plan to reflect their needs and concerns and practice

### **Review and update the emergency evacuation procedures**

Status: Completed in 2023

In June 2023, the Individual Emergency Plan form was updated further to include comments from persons requiring assistance (PRA) during an emergency evacuation. The form is used by PRA to:

- self-declare their need for assistance during an evacuation
- ensure that they, their managers and monitors are aware of their specific procedures during an evacuation

### **Equipping persons requiring assistance with walkie-talkies (new)**

Status: In progress

During a recent evacuation in Ottawa, several PRAs were not aware of the next steps for evacuating the building despite filling out the Individual Emergency Plan form. To overcome this communication barrier, PRAs now have the option to be equipped with walkie-talkies to communicate directly with the evacuation coordinator. Further, Security Services also collaborated with the Accessibility Hub to find suitable assigned accessible and adaptive workspaces for PRAs who wish to use walkie-talkies.

Raise awareness of assistance available for employees requiring aid during building evacuations

Status: Ongoing

During employee onboarding sessions, Security Services meet individually with PRAs to discuss their needs and provide a walk-through of steps taken during an evacuation.

The Security Services intranet page has been updated with the new emergency evacuation procedures and PRA form. This information was also shared in the weekly employee newsletter and posted on information screens located in the office spaces (for example, near elevators).

Security Services is working with the Communications team to create a video explaining the emergency evacuation procedures which will include information for PRAs.

## Barrier 2.4: Availability of contacts for immediate assistance and for reporting accessibility issues

Covered in Barrier 1.4 under “Awareness through onboarding”.

## Barrier 2.5: Navigating ergonomic assessments, particularly while working at home

Raise awareness of current ergonomic options available and offer virtual ergonomic coaching sessions

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

Offer support to employees requiring an ergonomic assessment (new)

Status: Ongoing

Employees requiring assistance to navigate ergonomic assessments can now contact the Hub. The Hub works closely with employees, managers, Accommodations, and IT teams to organize ergonomic assessments and coordinate the purchase and installation of equipment, if and when required.



# Information and communication technologies (ICT)

## Barrier 3.1: Growing need for the right technology to support persons with disabilities in their work

INFC strives to equip employees with the right technology. At INFC, 89% of employees with disabilities feel they have the tools, technology and equipment they need to do their job, compared to 78% of employees with disabilities from other departments.<sup>2</sup>

Other actions are being taken in Barrier 2.1 under “Test INFC workplace accessibility with employees” and Barrier 2.5 “Navigating ergonomic assessments, particularly while working at home” to address this barrier.

### Provision of IT equipment

Status: Ongoing

Before the creation of the Hub, employees with accessibility-related IT needs had to make the request through their manager who would then connect with IT Services to action the request. Since its creation, the Hub has become the main point of contact for employees and managers requesting assistive technology or software. The Hub works directly with IT Services to coordinate the accommodations requests on behalf of the employee and liaise with Shared Services Canada’s Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program or Lending Library services as needed.

## Barrier 3.2: Challenges with person-first collaboration in a hybrid environment

### Good start with Microsoft (MS) Teams

Status: Ongoing

INFC is innovative in adopting new tools and technology. It has used Microsoft Office 365 products since March 2020. Microsoft Office 365 products have built-in accessibility features, such as the Accessibility Checker.

Employees are encouraged to use MS PowerPoint Live features to ensure greater accessibility (for example, option to increase font size, view pages at own pace, live captioning, auto-generated translation, high contrast). The Hub actively promotes these features across the Department through info-sessions and one-on-one coaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Public Service Employment Survey 2022, Q1. I have the tools, technology and equipment I need to do my job.

### Keep informed of new accessibility features and raise issues (new)

Status: Ongoing

The Hub worked with the Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Division to permit employees with accessibility needs to use the transcription feature in MS Teams. The transcription feature was disabled by default for security and privacy reasons.

Employees who wish to use the feature must receive guidance from the ATIP Division before it is enabled on their account.

The Hub and IT Services have also raised a problem with captioning in MS Teams. In a virtual meeting, when people verbally switch from English to French, or the opposite, persons using the captioning function must change the language manually to get accurate captioning. While they make the change, they may be missing part of the conversation. The Department will stay informed of improvements Microsoft may make with regards to captioning.

### Barrier 3.3: Fragmented knowledge and limited functional training of best practices for ICT accessibility

Covered in part in Barrier 1.4 under “Awareness through training and learning activities”.

### More training needed

Status: Ongoing

The IT Services team has developed guidelines to help employees create Power BI dashboards that comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA.

Power BI is an interactive data visualization software developed by Microsoft, while WCAG defines how to make web content more accessible for people with disabilities. There are three levels of compliance (A, AA and AAA), with AA being the level that is used in most accessibility rules and regulations around the world.

For details, see Barrier 4.1 under “Improve accessibility of departmental data”.

### Hire an ICT expert specialized in accessibility (new)

Status: Completed in 2023

INFC has hired an accessibility expert to support the integration of accessibility within the areas of information technology and information management, including the development of best practices and guidance documents. Further, this expert is supporting the Accessibility Hub in the development of training and outreach content.

## Barrier 3.4: Limited ways for users to provide regular feedback on ICT-specific accessibility issues

### Client Satisfaction survey

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

### Monitoring IT tickets for accessibility issues (new)

Status: In progress

IT Services is developing methods to keep track of accessibility requests, in collaboration with the Hub. For example, IT Services is working on adding an accessibility checkbox to tickets resolved by the team. This will enable the Department to identify services or tools provided related to accessibility. In addition, when using the self-service portal, employees will have the option to identify that their request relates to an accessibility need through the addition of a check box option entitled “accessibility”.

### Feedback questionnaire on new boardrooms at 180 Kent (new)

Status: Completed in 2023

As described in Barrier 2.1 under “Test INFC workplace accessibility with employees”, the Accessibility Testers Group had the opportunity to share their views on a number of boardrooms as well as common spaces on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor at 180 Kent Street in Ottawa. Since construction is completed on that floor, feedback will be taken into consideration when configuring workspaces on other floors.

# Communication, other than information and communication technologies

## Barrier 4.1: Information is not always accessible to all employees

In the Plan, INFC recognized that its information and data can be made more accessible and that it will consider improving the accessibility of content as it works to address this barrier.

### Information sent out to employees to adhere to accessibility best practices

Status: Ongoing

The Communications Branch continues to ensure that the corporate information sent out to employees (for example, via the weekly employee newsletter, emails, and the intranet) follows accessibility best practices.

### Ensure that all corporate templates adhere to accessibility best practices

Status: In progress

The Accessibility Hub with the Accessible Content and Templates working group is working to make corporate templates more accessible, such as using sans serif font, adjusting the font size and ensuring adequate colour contrast between text and background.

### Improve accessibility of INFC's intranet

Status: In progress

The Communications Branch advises on accessibility to help ensure content for the intranet is accessible on an on-going basis.

The Communications Branch is including alt text for images included in the weekly employee newsletter. INFC's Content Management System allows for the inclusion of alt-text to all images and content owners are encouraged to include alt-text when posting images to the intranet.

The Communications Branch is also looking at creating guidelines for the digital screens located in the office. The screens are used to share information with employees (for example, reminders, upcoming trainings, resources). These guidelines will ensure that all visuals are accessible, both from visual accessibility and neurodiversity perspectives.

### Improve accessibility of departmental data

Status: Ongoing

The IT Services team is developing guidelines to help ensure that PowerBI dashboards are accessible and meet the Web Compliance Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA requirements.

#### Develop a checklist for accessible content (new)

Status: In progress

The Hub is developing a checklist to help employees create accessible content. The checklist will be shared with the Accessible Content and Templates working group for input and promoted department-wide through the intranet and the weekly employee newsletter once finalized.

### Barrier 4.2: Departmental events and activities are not always inclusive and accessible to all employees

For change to happen, people need to get together and start the conversation. Effective change can only happen when multiple voices are heard. Events and activities organized by INFC—for employees and for the public—are one way of hearing people’s opinions and concerns. It is therefore essential to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to participate in these events and activities.

#### MS Teams

Covered in Barrier 3.2 under “Good start with Microsoft (MS) Teams”.

#### Promote best practices and resources

Status: Ongoing

The Hub is promoting best practices for inclusive meetings through info-sessions, one-on-one coaching as well as content on the intranet. Details on the number of sessions held this year can be found in the “Equipping employees and managers with tools and resources” section under Priority 1.

## Procurement of goods, services and facilities

### Barrier 5.1: Consulting after procurement instead of involving persons with disabilities early in the process

#### Work with Public Services and Procurement Canada

Status: Ongoing

INFC has incorporated accessibility criteria into bids. For example, the request for proposal for language training services included mandatory corporate criteria that asked bidders to demonstrate they can accommodate employees with learning and/or physical disabilities. This will ensure that INFC can offer language training to its employees.

### Barrier 5.2: Complex process for procuring the services of external service providers

#### Client support provided

Status: Ongoing

The Procurement Services team is continuing to provide guidance and advice to employees.

#### Establish contracts for accessibility

Status: In progress

INFC is committed to offering a barrier-free, inclusive, and accessible workplace. As the Department is growing and hiring more employees, including persons with disabilities, it is important that it provides employees with the resources they need to do their job. Therefore, INFC is creating a departmental contract for occupational therapy and ergonomic assessment services.

Occupational therapy and ergonomic assessment services is an option that will be used when other resources cannot assist an employee with functional limitations in determining the tools they need to successfully complete their work. Services will be offered virtually or in-person to INFC employees throughout Canada.

The Hub is working closely with the Procurement Services team to identify and select the most suitable service provider.

#### Make procurement process information accessible

Covered in Barrier 1.4 under “Awareness through training and learning activities” to make information accessible to all employees, including information on the procurement process.

## Barrier 5.3: Challenges of targeting procurement activities towards underrepresented groups

### The Pilot: Procurement of Employment Systems Review

Status: Completed before the publishing of the Plan

As part of the in-progress Employment Systems Review, INFC piloted social procurement practices. It reviewed and adapted the procurement evaluation criteria to better understand the challenges and barriers minority-led or minority-owned businesses face in contracting with the government.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

The following actions, including the creation of a working group on accessible programs and policies, will help policy makers and program officers to integrate an accessibility lens to the design and delivery of their programs and services.

### Barrier 6.1: Policy design regularly prioritizes other concerns over accessibility

#### Gender-based Analysis Plus work

Status: In progress

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) is an analytical process used to assess how diverse people may experience programs, policies and initiatives. It focuses on the lived experience and intersectional characteristics people and communities, including biological, socio-cultural, and factors such as age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography, language, race, religion, sex, gender and sexual orientation. The overall goal is to help ensure that projects and programs contribute to more inclusive outcomes for Canadians, including those with disabilities.

Current programs include criteria for projects that are funded to meet horizontal federal requirements for barrier-free design. This includes meeting or exceeding the requirements of the highest published accessibility standards (for example, the Canadian Standards Association Technical Standard Accessible Design for the Built Environment (CAN/CSA B651-12, or newer)) in addition to any applicable provincial or territorial building codes, and relevant municipal by-laws. Under INFC's direct-delivery programs, project proposals seeking funding are scored against merit criteria which may include the proposal's contribution to inclusivity outcomes, including for Canadians with disabilities. However, there is no consistent approach to evaluating and measuring the accessibility of the process leading to the development of these assets.

Regarding new programming, the Department is looking at ways to measure the impacts of its programs on the various segments of the population, including Canadians living with disabilities.

### Barrier 6.2: Unclear requirements for accessibility in programs

#### Communities and Infrastructure Programs Branch identified work to be done

**Conduct an assessment of core programs to determine whether biases and accessibility barriers exist**

Status: In progress



The Accessible Programs and Policies working group, composed of program leads across the Department, is assessing programs to identify barriers related to the design and delivery of programs and services. Participants work together to remove barriers and make Canadian communities more accessible.

**Include accessibility-specific indicators and performance metrics in new programs**

Status: In progress

INFC's mandate has expanded to include housing and homelessness, and infrastructure programs are being renewed. In addition, the Departmental Results Framework (DRF) will be reviewed in 2024. These present opportunities to further incorporate accessibility considerations into our departmental program performance measurement, which in turn should result in a broader departmental impact and outcomes narrative. Discussions at the director level were held in November to sensitize program leads about the importance of accessibility-specific indicators. The Hub is participating in performance measurement committees and working groups to proactively bring forward the accessibility lens pending the DRF review.

**Ensure program materials and portals are accessible and in compliance with plain language and accessible Web design standards, ensure that all programs are available in multiple service delivery channels, and ensure the availability of alternate formats for documents/materials**

Status: In progress

This action is covered in large part under Barrier 4.1 "Information is not always accessible to all employees". The Hub and members of the Accessible Programs and Policies working group are promoting best practices, and making sure they are applied to all program materials, regardless of the target audience.

**Work with legal services and contracting units to develop wording to include in the statement of work/selection criteria regarding usability by all Canadians as a contractual obligation**

Status: Not started (expected completion in Fall 2024)

## Barrier 6.3: Gap in the availability of information, data and ongoing feedback mechanisms on accessibility

### Accessibility-specific questions

Status: Ongoing

Data is essential to guide public infrastructure investments that meet local needs. Therefore, INFC funds Canada’s Core Public Infrastructure (CCPI) survey, which is conducted in collaboration with Statistics Canada to better understand our core public infrastructure and determine current and future needs.

However, gaps were identified with regards to the survey:

- survey asks respondents to self-report on the accessibility of their infrastructure and assets without providing guidance on the meaning of “accessible”
- there is a lack of alignment across jurisdictions with respect to transit accessibility standards

Findings from the CCPI 2022 survey will be available in 2024.

The Department is exploring ways (for example, consultations) to improve the CCPI 2024 survey to collect results that reflect more accurately the accessibility of assets.

### Explore how to expand information and data and to maximize their use

Status: In progress

As mentioned under Barrier 4.1 “Information is not always accessible to all employees”, the Department is drafting guidelines to help ensure dashboards are accessible.

### Consultations

Status: In progress

The Department is still working on establishing a consultative mechanism.

## Barrier 6.4: Fragmented knowledge and limited functional training on accessibility for policy and programs

### More awareness and training on accessibility is needed

Status: In progress

As mentioned in Barrier under 1.4 “Awareness through training and learning activities”, the Hub is promoting best practices, tools and resources, special events and learning opportunities on accessibility to staff. For example, the Hub provided info-sessions on

how to create accessible content and organize inclusive meetings to staff responsible for engaging with the public.

We acknowledge that more needs to be done to identify and address barriers regarding the design and delivery of INFC's programs and services. Once the assessment of core programs under Barrier 6.2 is completed, the Accessible Programs and Policies working group will propose additional actions to address the gaps in knowledge on accessibility for policy and programs.

# Transportation

Over the past year, the Department gained a better understanding of the transit accessibility considerations and recognizes that it has a key role to play in making Canada's communities accessible via its support for public transit and active transportation.

Transportation in Canada is an area of shared responsibility among the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. The *Accessible Canada Act* was established to remove and prevent barriers in areas of federal jurisdiction, which includes international and inter-provincial transportation (for example, airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

In general, provinces, territories and municipalities are primarily responsible for building, owning, and operating intra-provincial transportation infrastructure, including public transit and active transportation. Infrastructure Canada supports its provincial, territorial, and municipal partners through capital funding programs, including the upcoming permanent public transit funding, to ensure public transit and active transportation infrastructure meets the diverse needs of Canadians.

Safe and affordable public transit and active transportation networks provide Canadians with access to healthcare, education, employment, social services, community, and cultural activities. However, people with disabilities continue to face unique barriers to transit and paratransit that limit their access to these essential services and participation in society.

In 2022, the Department launched a public engagement to inform permanent federal funding for public transit and active transportation, which will begin in 2026-27. Through this engagement, INFC sought input from the public, provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous peoples, transit agencies, and stakeholders on a number of topics. One of them was about ensuring that the Government of Canada appropriately considers social inclusion and accessibility in public transit planning and projects.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of:

- offering accessible and inclusive transit options to help Canadians travel to nearby communities for work, school, appointments and family visits
- building complete communities around public transit and active transportation networks
- developing tailored programs to address their unique realities
- engaging with persons with disabilities to ensure their needs and concerns are factored into project planning

Findings from the engagement were published in 2023 in the report entitled [Permanent, Integrated, and Locally Responsive: New Foundations for Public Transit Funding in Canada](#).

The Department is also focussing on collecting disaggregated data to better understand equity considerations, including for persons with disabilities. This includes collaboration with and support to the [Mobilizing Justice](#) project at the University of Toronto. This project builds data and evidence base around equity in transportation policies and programs.

The Accessible Programs and Policies working group will be responsible for exploring this area.

# Consultations

## Consultations with the Persons with Disabilities Network

In preparing this progress report, the Hub met with the Chair of the Persons with Disabilities Network to learn more about barriers identified by members. Most concerns were about the following:

- lack of benefits to self-identifying
- lack of opportunities for career progression

The draft progress report was shared with members of the network early in the process. Members had the opportunity to share their comments regarding the progress made in 2023.

Members of the network mentioned that they would appreciate more opportunities to provide input on the report and other tools that INFC is developing that have an impact on persons with disabilities. We acknowledge that INFC needs to increase its engagement and consultation activities with its employees with disabilities and intends to do so in the next reporting period.

## Meetings with other government departments

The Hub met with other government departments working in the area of accessibility to share best practices and resources. Topics discussed included:

- duty to accommodate
- culture change
- process for consulting with persons with disabilities
- process for collecting feedback
- tracking of progress

These discussions helped the Hub to start developing its own processes based on the size of the Department and the current organizational structure.

## Participation in working groups and community of practice

While the Hub recognizes the importance of consulting directly with persons with disabilities, it also values indirect feedback from areas across the Department and the public service. The Hub remains up-to-date on various accessibility issues and solutions within INFC and the public service by participating in the following working groups and communities of practice:

- INFC Weekly Hybrid Workplace Model meeting
- INFC Workplace Health and Safety Committee
- INFC Policy Occupational Health and Safety Committee

- TBS's Designated Senior Officials on Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice
- Interdepartmental Committee on Disability Issues
- Interdepartmental HR Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities
- GC Workplace Accessibility Passport Adopter Community of Practice
- Interdepartmental Accessibility Community of Practice (IACoP)
- Community of Practice on Accessible Communications
- Disability Inclusion and Workplace Accommodation Community of Practice
- Human Resources Council (HRC)

## ADM consultation with employees with disabilities

In July 2023, a consultation was held with employees with disabilities at INFC to hear about the barriers they are facing, and progress made over the past year. The Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) from the Transformation Branch, under which the Hub operates, wanted to hear firsthand from employees with disabilities about their experiences with accessibility at the Department. This assisted the Hub and the ADM in identifying key areas of focus for INFC with regards to the Clerk's 2023 [Call to Action Forward Direction](#) on anti-racism, equity and inclusion in the federal public service.

To keep the process confidential, the Chair of the Persons with Disabilities Network coordinated invitations. The group discussion was held in a hybrid format with participants joining in-person and virtually. Participants openly shared their experience and concerns with the ADM. They highlighted the benefits of the Hub:

- less burden to prove their disabilities
- easier coordination of accommodation requests
- an opportunity to collaboratively find solutions
- timely assistance and advice

Participants also shared some concerns:

- While they do not think self-identifying as persons with disabilities in the workplace would have any negative impact, they do not see any benefit of doing so.
- Employees with disabilities feel they have fewer career development opportunities when compared to other employees.
- Assessment processes disadvantage persons with disabilities (for example, administrative burden).

In response to these concerns and others raised by various groups within the Department, the ADM created three working groups in Fall 2023, including the Talent Management and Sponsorship Programs working group. This working group helps to address various barriers for equity-seeking groups in response to the Clerk's [Call to Action Forward Direction](#) on anti-racism, equity and inclusion in the federal public

service. As highlighted under Barrier 1.6 “Limited opportunity and support for career progression”, a department-wide call out was sent to recruit members from every level and classification.

## ADM drop-in sessions in Montreal

INFC is expanding its regional presence, which will allow more employees working outside the National Capital Region to participate in the hybrid work model. Hybrid work creates an opportunity to foster a sense of belonging and teamwork across the Department. The opening of the Montreal office to all Montreal-area employees in September 2023 was the first step in growing the departmental regional presence. To prepare for the transition, a Q&A session for employees was organized in August 2023 in which the Hub was present to answer questions related to accessibility (for example, accommodations measures, adjustments to workspaces, and specialized tools or equipment). The Hub was contacted to provide further accessibility support to some employees who were returning to the office.

The Transformation Branch’s Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) spent four days in Montreal during the opening of the office to welcome all employees and provide them with an opportunity to share their first impressions and concerns. Three drop-in sessions were held with approximately 20 participants per session. Some participants indicated that they did not feel they had the same level of support as employees from the National Capital Region and were happy to learn that an office manager was hired to work in person in the Montreal office. The Hub is providing support to employees and managers who reached out.

## Online survey about boardrooms

As described under Barrier 2.1 “One-size-fits-all” approach for designing post-pandemic offices and hybrid work plans, IT Services and Accommodations have consulted with industry experts and introduced some new design elements and technology for INFC employees to test, including those with a disability through an accessibility testers group. INFC conducted a short online survey to gather feedback from all employees on boardrooms. The survey asked about the following:

- ease of using the videoconferencing equipment
- room layout and furniture
- position of screens and cameras
- quality of the video

Overall, 60% of employees who responded to the survey felt that the video quality was great during their hybrid work meetings. However, only 40% felt that the screens and cameras were well positioned.

Feedback from employees was analyzed and used to narrow down the furniture selections from a variety of suppliers.



## Call out to colleagues with disabilities to share their story

To commemorate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities on December 3, the Accessibility Hub invited INFC employees living with a disability or supporting a person living with a disability to share their personal stories, including challenges and insights.

Employees were invited to write an article in the weekly employee newsletter published in early December 2023 or volunteer to take part in future armchair discussions on accessibility.

The goal is to promote a safe and inclusive space where employees could share their lived experiences, raise awareness and learn from each other. Personal stories are powerful and can inspire others.

# Feedback

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, INFC is required to establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the barriers INFC employees and other people (for example, clients, suppliers, the public) face when interacting with the organization.

In 2023, the Department received four submissions through its anonymous feedback form on accessibility. Some people indicated their satisfaction with the Plan, while others expressed concerns about productivity in the office. Another concern raised by employees was the hybrid work requirement and how there are accessibility impacts for some. In response, the Deputy Minister sent an email to all employees in February 2023 to announce the new workplace booking system that provides employees with the option of selecting their office space (including quiet rooms). INFC's intranet also includes a section on hybrid work, with links and tools for employees.

Since its creation, the Hub has provided service to approximately 70 employees requiring support to obtain the tools they need to be successful in their job or who were looking for information on accessibility-related topics. The Hub received positive feedback from employees and managers regarding its creation and the support provided. In discussions with Hub team members, some employees even admitted opening up about their disabilities for the first time since their arrival at INFC.

Throughout the year, the Hub addressed issues that were brought forward by working directly with contacts from other departmental teams (such as IT and Accommodations). It was noted that some issues remain, such as the timeliness of obtaining more complex tools and the lack of support for assistive technology.

In 2024, the Hub will continue to work with teams across the Department to address these issues through the different initiatives highlighted in this Report.

## Centralizing the approach to accommodations

Streamlining the accommodation process will be a priority in 2024. Given that 40% of INFC employees with disabilities request workplace accommodation measures<sup>3</sup>, better coordination between the various groups (for example, the Hub, Labour Relations, Accommodations, IT Services) will benefit many employees. The development of process maps is being explored as a solution to clarify roles and responsibilities, specifically with regards to duty to accommodate requests.

In addition, the Hub is working towards creating a centralized fund to cover the costs of accommodation requests that require equipment and tools. This will facilitate the coordination process and enhance the user experience. This will also reduce inequalities across the Department as each employee will have equal access to the

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<sup>3</sup> Public Service Employment Survey 2022, Q83: Having carefully read the definition of duty to accommodate, have you requested workplace accommodation measures in the last two years?

service. In fact, employees with disabilities feel less comfortable than others to request workplace accommodation measures from their immediate supervisor.<sup>4</sup>

## Recruiting persons with disabilities

INFC is committed to supporting the Government in reaching its target of hiring 5,000 persons with disabilities by 2025. While the Department is being mindful of creating staffing processes that are flexible and inclusive, more can be done to ensure that candidates with disabilities have a positive experience. The Department needs to continue to create an environment where everyone feels safe, welcome, respected and valued by the organization. There is also a need to focus on the retention of current employees.

As described under Barrier 1.3 “Emotional labour of self-advocacy and providing proof of disability”, INFC will adapt its staffing processes based on the amendments to the *Public Service Employment Act*. It will also conduct a pilot project to test new assessment methods.

The Hub will continue to promote culture change and integrate accessibility across the Department, with a focus on senior management. Efforts are being made to recruit candidates with disabilities, but we continue to hear from hiring managers that they often do not feel fully supported by senior management. The Hub has also heard that managers are concerned that their team productivity might decrease because of possible accommodations and the associated administrative burden. We acknowledge that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to change these biases and workplace culture.

## Focussing on the retention of employees with disabilities

Hiring persons with disabilities is a priority for the Department as well as the Government of Canada; however, the retention of employees is equally important.

A survey revealed that 71% of employees with disabilities would prefer to remain at INFC even if a comparable job was available elsewhere in the federal public service, compared to 57% of employees with disabilities from other departments.<sup>5</sup> Even though INFC is doing better than the public service in general, there is still room for improvement, and we are working on strategies that will assist the Department in retaining employees with disabilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Public Service Employment Survey 2022, Q87: I would feel comfortable requesting workplace accommodation measures from my immediate supervisor.

<sup>5</sup> Public Service Employment Survey 2022, Q55: I would prefer to remain with my department or agency, even if a comparable job was available elsewhere in the federal public service.

## Encouraging employees with disabilities to self-identify

We have heard from employees with disabilities at INFC that there is little interest in completing the self-identification form for the following reasons:

- They do not see the personal benefit of doing so.
- They feel it is useless because they are not aware of many employees benefiting from self-identification.
- They feel they could face discrimination, harassment, and bias from management.

We acknowledge the potential impacts self-identifying may have on employees with disabilities and also understand how failing to do so can hinder departmental progress. Without accurate statistics and data on employees with disabilities at INFC, some services and programs for employees may not accurately reflect or meet their needs. We are working diligently on building programming and services to support employees in self-identifying.

## Developing a performance measurement framework for accessibility

For new programming that is being developed over the next year, the Department is looking at ways to incorporate more consistent approaches to reporting GBA Plus outcomes for diverse population groups, including Canadians with disabilities.

This will help to inform the work to follow over the next two years, where the Hub will work with key stakeholders to further develop, validate, and refine accessibility-specific outcomes and indicators. This will include the creation of data collection mechanisms with branches and program areas to allow the Department to measure its progress towards becoming barrier-free by 2040.

## Conclusion

In 2023, INFC laid the foundation for accessibility improvements to ensure that all employees can contribute fully to the workforce and experience a barrier-free workplace.

The Accessibility Hub engaged in meaningful conversations with employees, managers, and senior management to address some of the barriers to accessibility identified in INFC's Accessibility Plan for 2023–2025 and raise awareness by promoting best practices and sharing tools.

Looking forward, the Department will continue to advocate for accessibility and work towards meeting the *Accessible Canada Act*'s commitment to creating a barrier-free Canada by 2040.