



PrairiesCan

Accessibility Plan – Annual Progress Report

December 2023



Prairies Economic
Development Canada

Développement économique
Canada pour les Prairies

Canada



Prairies Economic
Development Canada

Développement économique
Canada pour les Prairies

Canada

Catalogue no.: lu98-1/9E-PDF

ISSN 2817-9102

Table of Contents

- General**..... 3
- Departmental Feedback process** 3
- Consultations** 3
- PrairiesCan’s Action Plan**..... 4
 - Priority Area: Employment 4
 - Priority Area: Built Environment 5
 - Priority Area: Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) 6
 - Priority Area: Communication, Other than ICT 6
 - Priority Area: Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities 7
 - Priority Area: Design and Delivery of Programs and Services 7
 - Priority Area: Transportation 8
- Looking forward** 8

General

Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) is proud to provide its first (1st) annual progress report of the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#) based on the [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#).

This first annual progress report identifies progress made since the publishing of the PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025.

The ACA requires organizations to publish progress reports on the implementation of their accessibility plans. The progress reflects the organization's policies, programs, practices and services in relation to identifying, removing and preventing barriers.

Departmental Feedback process

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

Send your accessibility questions, feedback and suggestions; or to request an alternate version, by phone, email or by letter to:

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

Consultations

The PrairiesCan Employee Resource Group (ERG), which includes members from all equity seeking groups and allies, including those that self-identify as a person with a disability, was consulted during the creation of this first annual Progress report. This included one-on-one discussions and an open offer for employees and management to share possible barriers, as well as best practices and opportunities in accessibility, specifically on the seven areas identified in the Accessible Canada Act.

Feedback received during these consultations include:

- Persons with disabilities report being unaware of the process to request accommodation and the types of accommodation available and/or possible.
- Suggested additional training for managers and employees around accommodation and normalizing the discussion and process.
- Challenges in the workplace, such as a lack of automatic door openers, and sufficient number of accessible washrooms.

PrairiesCan appreciates the feedback received, and will work with our partners to find solutions, including continuing to work with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to make office space more accessible.

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

PrairiesCan's Action Plan

As mentioned in the Clerk of the Privy Council's Call to Action,

“As persons with visible and invisible disabilities continue to face physical and technological barriers, the approaches we develop must be truly inclusive by also being truly accessible.

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

Below is the progress PrairiesCan has made to support a more inclusive and accessible workplace and public service.

Priority Area: Employment

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

- Continue to promote training events to raise awareness, and create an inclusive culture and work environment.

Progress made:

- Departmental persons with disabilities representation increased 3.4% from 2022.
- Training sessions provided to staffing sub-delegated managers regarding the July 1st, 2023 amendments to the Public Service Employment Act and the evaluation of barriers and biases in assessment.
- Implemented a departmental tool for mitigating biases and barriers in assessment.
- New Staffing Sub-Delegation Attestation to be signed by all delegated managers by December 31, 2023, which outlines the specific responsibilities and authorities delegated to the individual.
- Human Resources Specialists are enhancing their knowledge through learning and development with a focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and to promote initiatives.
- All executives received training on unconscious bias, diversity, and inclusion.
- The PrairiesCan 2023 President's Awards included the Patrick Faulkner Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Award (IDEA) to recognize the outstanding contribution of a team or an individual who has demonstrated significant commitment and leadership in embracing and encouraging inclusion, diversity and equity within the department or within their local community.
- Departmental PSES disaggregated results were reviewed and analyzed during an All-Executive retreat in September 2023. Common themes and areas of focus were highlighted during the All-staff President Townhall the following week.
- Review of current staffing qualified pools for employment equity candidates, including persons with disabilities, and active marketing of their use, to help meet the Government of Canada's commitment to hire 5000 new persons with disabilities by 2025.
- CO-01, Business Officer, external advertised process for Alberta Region targeted 3 of 4 employment equity groups, including persons with disabilities. Over 50% of applicants who self-identified as persons with disabilities, have been placed in the qualified pool.
- Weekly learning emails to all staff promoting various training events. Themes included Mental Health; Mental Illness; Workplace Accommodation; Unconscious Bias; Inclusive Hiring Practices; and Inclusive Leadership.
- Continued departmental contract with Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI).

Priority Area: Built Environment

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

Progress made:

- Calgary office renovation was managed by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), which included accessibility considerations.
- Edmonton office was included in the PSPC accessibility audit of all Base Building (common) space in Canada Place. PrairiesCan will continue to work with PSPC to make office space more accessible.

Priority Area: Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

Progress made:

- Updated Software/Service Request form which includes accessibility assessment section.
- Departmental roll-out of Office 365 and Kofax PDF, includes built in accessibility features.

Priority Area: Communication, Other than ICT

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

Progress made:

- Audit of the external PrairiesCan website for plain language began and is ongoing.
- Implemented a process for preparing social media posts, which requires:
 - alt-text descriptions for images;
 - use of plain language;
 - ensuring all visual content (graphics, images, video) adhere to visibility and contrast standards; and
 - limiting the use of emojis in social media posts.
- Use of closed captions and subtitles on all video content.

- Department-wide messaging, including the importance of self-identification; information on International Day of Sign Languages event; and Mental Illness Awareness week.

Priority Area: Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

Progress made:

- Continued use of standing offers, which has accessibility built into the process.
- Use of larger text in contract documents.
- Remained up-to-date with PSPC and Treasury Board (TBS) standards and policies.
- Departmental presence on interdepartmental committees regarding procurement, which includes discussions around accessibility.

Priority Area: Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

As indicated in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), PrairiesCan committed to:

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

Progress made:

- During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the EDP program has produced the following results:
 - 72 businesses created, maintained, or expanded;
 - 940 clients served; and
 - more than 1,420 business advisory services provided to clients.
- Continued supporting the Government of Canada's commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion, recognizing that participation of underrepresented groups (including persons with disabilities) is key to building a strong and inclusive regional and national economy. In 2023, PrairiesCan continued to leverage its funding application forms, which include a voluntary self-declaration section for underrepresented groups (including persons with disabilities), to better understand the reach of the department's programs.
- Program guides continued to provide information to applicants on the collection and use of inclusivity data.

Priority Area: Transportation

Although indicated as not applicable in the [PrairiesCan Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#), should the situation arise where this is required, PrairiesCan will explore best practices, legislation, and policies; and will focus on identifying, removing and preventing barriers accordingly.

Looking forward

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

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