

INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2023

DECEMBER 31, 2023



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

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General

Executive Summary

In accordance with the mandates of the *Accessible Canada Act*, we were proud to publish the Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Accessibility Plan last December. The department uses the principles of honesty, equity and transparency in our work to support service delivery and community development with First Nations, Inuit and Métis. These same principles are applied to identify and eliminate barriers for people with disabilities, both internally for our employees and in our service delivery. Throughout 2023, we have made strides to enhancing accessibility across our department. We acted on our commitment to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities. This Progress Report outlines the actions ISC has taken to remove barriers to accessibility in 2023.

ISC progressed in making its employment practices more accessible by reviewing internal employment systems and adopting additional inclusive hiring practices.. ISC began taking actions to respond to the feedback received from persons with disabilities regarding the built environment by making some initial changes. We developed an Information Management and Information Technologies (IM-IT) implementation plan to create more accessible information technologies. We piloted training sessions with employees to increase our accessible communications. We implemented various measures in procurement to raise awareness of accessibility considerations. Through a series of Digital by Design projects aimed at creating digital solutions, we have also enhanced the accessibility of our services for the communities we serve. We consulted with employees with disabilities to gather feedback on their experiences and to identify new barriers throughout the year. We recognize that despite our planned actions, the combination of the significant renovation and restoration projects in the built environment across the country and the implementation of the Treasury Board Secretariat's *Direction on Prescribed presence in the workplace* affected accessibility for some of our employees. We are committed to recognizing new barriers and taking actions to remove them. We will continue to engage persons with disabilities to make ISC a department that is barrier-free and inclusive to all.

Contact Information

You are invited to provide feedback on barriers to accessibility, implementation of the current ISC Accessibility Plan, or on the contents of this progress report. You may submit feedback anonymously by choosing not to provide personal information. Receipt of all accessibility feedback received will be acknowledged, and if asked for a response it will be communicated in the same way that feedback is received. Only feedback submitted anonymously will not receive a response or receipt of acknowledgement.

You may also use our contact information to request a copy of the Accessibility Plan in an alternate format (such as large font, braille, American Sign Language [ASL] and langue des signes québécoise [LSQ]), or to request a copy of the feedback process in an alternate format.

The Senior Policy Advisor on accessibility is designated to receive feedback or alternate format requests on behalf of ISC.

Email: accessibilityfeedback-retroactionaccessibilite@sac-isc.gc.ca

Mail:

Indigenous Services Canada
Accessible Canada Act (ACA) Implementation Secretariat
15 Eddy Street
Postal stop 15-4
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4
Canada

Phone: 1-800-567-9604

Alternatively, you may provide feedback by filling out our [Accessibility feedback form](#).

What we have learned

The journey in 2023, towards our goal of achieving a barrier-free Canada by 2040, started a clear intention, as well as feelings of enthusiasm and optimism, which helped propel us to begin the work. We are proud that we took concrete measures and actions to directly address some of our identified barriers; however, we also acknowledge past and remaining challenges, which impact the deployment of certain measures and delivery of certain actions.

The implementation of the Treasury Board Secretariat's *Direction on Prescribed presence in the workplace* at the same time as many of our offices were undergoing significant renovations resulted in unexpected, yet important, impact on employees with disabilities. The ISC Accessibility Plan was developed while the new Direction was not yet known; as a result, the Plan had not accounted for the impact that return to the workplace processes would have on our planned actions and for employees with disabilities, particularly with the new unassigned seating model.

Some of the experiences encountered during the first year of our Accessibility Plan have caused us to reflect on the work that we are doing, and to recognize that for us to truly reach the target of being barrier-free by 2040 will require more than delivering on an Accessibility Plan. Beyond the production of a plan and its related report, we make a strong case to see accessibility considered as part of decision-making. More specifically, and starting in 2024, ISC's Integrated Business Planning exercise at the whole departmental level, will include – as a rule – the consideration for accessibility measures and actions in relations to program and service delivery, as well as part of investments, and internal services business planning. Furthermore, ISC will be – as part of its reporting on results – tracking progress and delivery on stated measures. ISC will work with the Government of Canada authorities in establishing proper performance measures, towards gradually building capacity in its measure of impact of decisions, measures and actions taken. This will be supported by strong governance and an Accessibility Portfolio-type function bringing together departmental policy authority, program and regional leadership, corporate functional authorities, and other key, implicated parties such as the Champion, the Ombudsperson, etc. The mandate being to leverage the current Accessibility Plan and review progress, challenge and test measures and actions projected, and reflect input from networks and various sources

in, seeking to adapt efforts where required, and ensure communications and constant linking back to departmental plans and reports. This is to create a culture where we are accessible by default and where an accessibility lens is applied to all of our business decisions.

Areas in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

The seven priority areas described under Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) include:

- 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

Employment

In July 2023, the Public Service Commission (PSC) implemented two amendments to the *Public Service Employment Act*, which are intended to support the goal of creating a more inclusive and diverse public service. The first amendment requires departments and agencies subject to the act to evaluate assessment methods used in hiring processes (like interviews or written exams) for biases and barriers that disadvantage people belonging to equity-seeking groups, and to take steps to remove or mitigate any biases or barriers that are found. The second amendment expands the authorities of the PSC and deputy heads to investigate errors, omissions or improper conduct specifically resulting from biases or barriers in staffing that disadvantage people belonging to equity-seeking groups.

These amendments are an important step to removing biases and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the staffing process. ISC promoted these changes through information sessions held with hiring managers, in employee newsletters and managers communities, and in all staff messages from the head of human resources.

In addition to the activities outlined above, stemming from the legislative amendments, the following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in the area of employment at ISC and to address the barriers from the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

Barrier 1

Requests for accommodation are not processed in an efficient or timely manner.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- ISC identified the [Government of Canada \(GoC\) Accessibility Passport](#) as a way to increase efficiency and timeliness related to accommodation requests. The passport facilitates the collaboration between managers and employees as it focuses on barriers and solutions, rather than disabilities, to respond to employee needs.

- As an early adopter of the GoC Workplace Accessibility Passport, ISC worked to promote awareness and the use of the Passport across the department. ISC published ten articles in the department's internal weekly newsletter to inform and share tools relating to the Passport. The Intranet Accessibility hub was also updated to add resources relating to the Passport. An additional subpage to the Intranet Accessibility hub dedicated to the Passport has been prepared for publication at the beginning of 2024.
- Information on the use of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport and the Duty to Accommodate was shared at information sessions offered to all employees, as well as targeted sessions provided to different managerial groups, provided by the Centre for Abilities Management and Workplace Wellbeing.
- As we transition to a hybrid working environment, ISC developed a process for employees who require specific accommodations and exemptions to support their accessibility needs. Since the implementation of this process, over 300 disability related accommodations related to return to work have been submitted.
- Additional actions are planned for 2024-25 to create a VIP team to expedite the processing and procurement of accommodation requests.

Barrier 2

Difficulty recruiting persons with disabilities.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- Managers were encouraged to consider pre-existing hiring pools including persons with disabilities when they are looking to fill positions.
- A pilot project began with Not-for-Profit Organizations (NPOs) in Quebec to recruit persons with disabilities more effectively. The project aims to make links with external organizations who support persons with disabilities in their job search. We plan to extend this project to other regions in the future.
- Goals were set to increase the number of employees with disabilities annually for the next 6 years. As part of our commitment, ISC recently participated in a career fair for students and graduates with disabilities for employment opportunities in the Government of Canada. This was held in partnership with the David C. Onley Initiative to connect federal government employers with post-secondary students and recent or soon-to-be graduates with disabilities from four partner institutions: Algonquin College, Carleton University, La Cité, and the University of Ottawa. The event was well attended, and several candidates were identified and referred to hiring managers.

Barrier 3

Difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in the hiring process.

Update on actions to address barrier 3

- Using internal communications, ISC promoted training offered by the Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA). Information sessions were also provided to management on accessibility and the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport.

- A review of internal employment systems and policies was completed. From this study additional inclusive hiring practices to implement were identified, and an action plan in accordance will be developed. ISC also ensured that its hiring managers and human resources advisors are familiar with changes in the *Public Service Employment Act*.

Barrier 4

Difficulties faced by persons with disabilities with respect to integration and retention.

Update on actions to address barrier 4

- The Centre for Abilities Management and Workplace Wellbeing has started to maintain a log of all open disability leave cases. The Centre will be monitoring these cases to ensure that the employees on leave are still being supported and receiving the correct pay.

Additional Actions Taken

- The Intranet Accessibility hub was updated to promote the ISC Accessibility Plan and accessibility feedback mechanisms. The hub also provides clarification and updated resources for return to worksites and duty to accommodate.
- Two virtual sessions, one in English and one in French, were held for all ISC employees to socialize the findings and actions within ISC's Accessibility Plan. These sessions were publicized in department-wide communications and were organized by the ISC Accessibility Champion, the Accessibility and Disability Employee Network, and the Centre for Abilities Management and Workplace Wellbeing accessibility unit.
- The employee network on accessibility and disabilities continued to meet regularly, supported by the ISC Accessibility Champion, to provide space for mutual employee support and resource sharing in the spirit of "Nothing about us without us".

Built environment

The following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in the area of built environment at ISC and address the barriers outlined in the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

Barrier 1

There is a lack of universal and accessible washrooms.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- The modernization of washrooms throughout ISC office and public spaces has been a priority action for both the department and Deputy Minister. Plans to modernize washrooms began before the publication of the first ISC Accessibility Plan in December 2022, and went above-and-beyond office modernization standards from Public Service Procurement Canada (PSPC).
- The implementation of washroom modernization solutions is funded by ISC in cases where actions may be out of PSPC's funding scope.
- Implementation has begun for plans to ensure that there are accessible washrooms at ISC locations with modernization in both renovation and new build projects ongoing.
- The following workplaces have completed universal washroom modernization in 2023:
 - o Quebec Regional Office: Quebec City
 - o National Capital Region: 9 Montclair (Gatineau)
- The following workplaces were acquired with universal washrooms already in place:
 - o National Capital Region: 410 Laurier (Ottawa)
 - o National Capital Region: Fontaine Building (Gatineau)
- The following workplaces have ongoing implementation of universal washroom modernization, continuing into 2024:
 - o National Capital Region: Terrasses de la Chaudière (Gatineau)
 - Six washrooms were made accessible in this building complex at the time of reporting.
 - o National Capital Region: Jeanne Mance Building (Ottawa)
 - o B.C. Regional Office: Vancouver

- Work to modernize workplaces in the following regions is being planned to include the implementation of universal washrooms by design:
 - o Alberta Regional Office: Edmonton
 - o Manitoba Regional Office: Winnipeg

Barrier 2

There are challenges to accessing certain collaboration office spaces due to the lack of automatic door openers.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- Automatic door openers are in the process of being implemented throughout its office spaces, including washrooms and boardrooms, through ongoing liaison with Public Service Procurement Canada (PSPC). This collaborative work will continue to ensure automatic door access as office locations are modernized.
- In an approach similar to that taken for universal washrooms, the implementation of this solution is funded by ISC in cases where the solution may be out of PSPC's funding scope.

Barrier 3

Persons with disabilities are facing challenges related to common space areas. Some challenges include difficulties accessing buildings, lack of braille signage, non-accessible height of kitchen sinks and counters, not-adaptable lighting, and narrow and cluttered passageways to corridors.

Update on actions to address barrier 3

- Liaison between ISC and PSPC is ongoing to improve the level of braille signage currently in workplace areas controlled by PSPC. A plan will also be developed to implement braille signage in ISC-controlled spaces.
- Bar-height meeting tables and chairs in common spaces will be replaced. Steps have already been taken to eliminate this furniture from the office designs in ongoing and future modernizations. Preparation is currently being done to procure the replacement of furniture under ISC control. The same will be recommended to PSPC in the office modernization projects under their control.
- Mandatory GCWorkplace fit-up standard in all office modernizations is being implemented in partnership with PSPC. This standard provides significant improvements in the decluttering of passageways and corridors and continues to ensure that spaces are compliant with accessibility legislation.
- A review of ISC regional offices will be done to ensure that non-renovated spaces are accessible and decluttered.
- Implementation will be planned in 2024 to install visual emergency alarm systems in office spaces, such as flashing lights, in addition to sound in all ongoing and future office modernizations.

Information and communications technologies

The following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) at ISC and to address the barriers from the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

An implementation plan for accessibility was developed with the Information and Management Technologies (IM-IT) sector. As well, an inventory management system within ICT is being created to capture, track and report on the accessibility conformance of all applications and software within ISC. This will allow IM-IT professionals to report on ICT that do not meet accessibility requirements and prioritize corrective measures by level of urgency starting in 2024-25.

Barrier 1

The information and communications technologies (ICT) within the organization do not consistently meet accessibility requirements.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- An IM-IT Accessibility Champion was identified. This Champion will continue to spearhead accessibility improvements throughout IM-IT. They also support employees with disabilities in receiving the accessible technology they need.

Work has been taken to create a pilot project to implement an ICT Inventory Management System for implementation during the 2024-25 fiscal year. This system will track, monitor and report on the accessibility conformance of all applications and software used within ISC and will be able to recommend accessible software and adaptive technology solutions through the system database.

Barrier 2

Instilling accessibility culture within IT Service and with employees will involve change, which may be met with some resistance. Employees want fully interactive and visually complex solutions that may not

be accessible. IM-IT professionals may lack the knowledge and awareness of adaptive technologies required for employees with disabilities.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- The IM-IT accessibility champion provided live demonstrations and training to senior management, client relationship managers and the project management office on how to make documents accessible. The IM-IT accessibility champion also held one-on-one sessions with all directors and senior directors within the IM-IT branch to discuss their role, actions and identify functional authorities within the IM-IT accessibility management plan.
- The IM-IT accessibility champion has been actively collecting information and resources to share by regularly attending sessions provided by the Accessibility, Accommodation, and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) initiative from Shared Services Canada (SSC). The AAACT “lending library” service for short-term accommodation solutions has also been promoted to senior management.
- A resource person was identified, who will be supporting incorporation of accessibility into ISC application development framework.
- IM-IT professionals will be attending upcoming accessibility trainings hosted by Shared Services Canada. These trainings will help build accessibility knowledge and expertise for accessibility testing.
- Directors and managers within IM-IT will be mandated to include accessibility training in employee performance management agreements for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Barrier 3

There is currently no funding allocated for accessibility development and testing within IT Services. Funding is required to increase IT Services' expertise and ability to assess ICT accessibility.

Update on actions to address barrier 3

- While funding remains challenging, ISC plans continue to explore ways to reduce or remove this barrier in 2024 and 2025. The IM-IT Planning team has been tasked within the Action Plan to include accessibility funding requirements in the annual ICT Departmental Plan in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and beyond.

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

The following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in the area of Communication, other than information and communication technologies at ISC and address the barriers from the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

Barrier 1

Internal and external email communications are not fully accessible and not in plain language.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- New intranet guidelines were launched, providing tips regarding web writing, with frequent promotion of plain and inclusive language and accessibility in the employee newsletter. ISC will continue to promote this resource in 2024 to ensure all employees understand the importance of document accessibility.
- Six training sessions were provided to employees of the sector related to accessibility and plain language, in addition to updating and promoting the Indigenous terminology guide, *Words Matter*, available to employees.
- Additional and as requested training as been prepared and delivered to various sectors on preparing accessible internal emails. ISC aims to provide training to employees in 2024.

Barrier 2

Documents, presentations, videos and events can be visually complex and not accessible to all.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- ISC continues to deliver on events for employees that are accessible for people with disabilities with a clear process for ensuring that sign language interpretation is offered in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) as well as the use of accessible virtual tools (e.g., Deputy Minister news).

Barrier 3

Existing internal and external web content that contains inaccessible information.

Update on actions to address barrier 3

- ISC continues moving towards removing this barrier in 2024 and 2025, including continuing to adhere to existing standards, educating employees within the department and ensuring employees receive the most recent training so they remain up-to-date on accessibility standards.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in the area of Procurement of goods, services and facilities at ISC and address the barriers from the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

Barrier 1

The *Accessible Canada Act* ACA is not always considered by business owners, technical authorities (TA), and employees when specifying requirements.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- Accessibility considerations were incorporated as part of Procurement 101 presentations for program managers, technical authorities and employees. This has positively influenced the awareness of accessibility in the procurement process.
- A mandatory attestation and checklist was created that is required for all program managers, technical authorities, and employees to include with their procurement requests. This

attestation requires that the individual indicates that they have made green, Indigenous, and accessible considerations in their procurement requests. They must provide an explanation if the consideration has not been made. The attestation will be in effect on January 1, 2024.

- Training was given to ISC Procurement officers by the Centre for Abilities Management and Workplace Wellness on accessible procurement best practices.

Barrier 2

Contracting officers lack commodity and market knowledge necessary to challenge the non-applicability of the ACA.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- This barrier continues to be addressed by ISC, which looks forward to greater progress in 2024 and 2025. The launch of the Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) within Public Service Procurement Canada (PSPC) is actively anticipated, as well as their supporting tools and resources.

Design and delivery of programs and services

The following actions were taken in 2023 to improve accessibility in the area of design and delivery of programs and services at ISC and address the barriers from the 2022 Accessibility Plan.

Barrier 1

Currently the design of new external programs and services has a greater need for an accessibility lens co-developed with Indigenous partners. This presents a barrier to external clients with disabilities in fully accessing ISC programs and services.

Update on actions to address barrier 1

- Action is planned towards removing this barrier in 2024 and 2025.

Barrier 2

Some programs and services, and aspects of programs and services, still present accessibility barriers to persons with disabilities.

Update on actions to address barrier 2

- Several Digital by Design projects were implemented that provide more digital solutions to programs and services in served communities. New ways have additionally been opened to communicate with the department, such as mail-in services, to ensure there is a wide variety of methods for people with disabilities to use ISC services.

Barrier 3

There is a greater need for employees that deliver programs and services to understand what accessibility standards must be followed when interacting with external clients. When delivering programs and services, the application of consistent accessibility best practices is not always provided.

Sometimes, this will lead to inconsistent levels of accessibility when delivering programs and services to clients.

Update on actions to address barrier 3

- Action is planned towards removing this barrier in 2024 and 2025.

Barrier 4

It has been expressed that there are several barriers that clients with disabilities experience when completing program and service application forms. Some examples of barriers that were shared include forms that are not in plain language, complex application processes, and the location of regional offices in some areas make the in-person access option not possible. There is also a need for increased awareness of the accessibility features and supports that ISC offers clients.

Update on actions to address barrier 4

- Efforts have begun to establish additional points of contact for ISC services. For example, administrative support for registration and card issuance services has expanded to more urban centers through partnerships with community and other resource centers.

Transportation

When the ISC Accessibility Plan was published in December 2022, transportation barriers were unable to be identified despite internal and external consultations being held. As a result, the 2022 plan does not include transportation barriers or actions. Since then, a new version of the Plan was published in November 2023. This version includes a new barrier to address ongoing concerns that travel service providers do not always treat travelers with disabilities with respect and dignity, nor do they provide satisfactory accommodation(s) to meet travelers' needs.

While this barrier was not identified during internal or external consultations held in 2022 during the development of the Plan, increasing media reports of poor treatment of persons with disabilities when travelling is being drawn from. Actions that could further inform on barriers impacting persons with disabilities have been considered as it relates to transportation. Over the next two years of this Plan, intentions of the department are to:

- Prepare new or amend existing communications to ensure that clients are aware of how to request accommodation when they travel for medical or dental care.
- Prepare new or amend existing communications to ensure that employees with disabilities are aware that they have the right to accommodation when traveling.
- Develop targeted feedback mechanisms related to travel and transportation to gather more information about the needs and experiences of ISC employees and clients.
- Develop and provide training to employees with outward-facing, client interaction roles to ensure that there is an awareness of available, accessible solutions to assist clients with disabilities to access services.

Implementation of these actions is looked forward to, and progress under this section will be reported on in future progress reports.

As part of the employee consultation series, a session was hosted to provide employees the opportunity to provide their feedback relating specifically to the transportation priority area. Please view the [transportation section under consultation findings](#) to view this feedback.

Consultations

In 2023, there was focus on engaging with employees with disabilities to understand their lived experiences as well as the challenges they have faced in moving to a hybrid work model. Intersectional identities shape the lived experience of people in many ways, and consultation through the different lenses that make up the department was sought for incorporation.

To receive input from stakeholders, third-party accessibility specialists worked with ISC to consult employees. The accessibility specialists hosted four focus group sessions in late 2023 to better understand the current realities of accessibility at ISC, including a table discussion with the ISC Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Task Force. Members of the department's network for employees with disabilities, along with employees with disabilities from the department at large, were invited to provide perspectives on their current experiences related to accessibility at ISC. Individual consultation sessions were dedicated to the following priority areas:

- Information and communication technologies (ICT); communication, other than ICT; and procurement of goods, services, and facilities
- Employment and built environment
- Transportation

For each priority area discussed, employees were encouraged to answer the following questions:

- Changes noticed in accessibility at ISC throughout 2023
- New barriers to accessibility at ISC that have emerged in 2023
- Recommended actions for ISC to take in 2024 and 2025 towards reducing and removing barriers to accessibility

Additionally, the accessibility specialists met with subject matter experts within the priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act*. All sessions were held virtually and included accessibility and accommodation considerations. All consultation data received was used to inform this progress report and will shape ISC's plans for the continued reduction and removal of barriers to accessibility.

Internal and external engagement on the Accessibility Plan and on accessibility in general is welcomed, allowing the department to make meaningful changes. The consultation data received in 2023 informs the strategic direction of the department. Changes made based on this consultation data will be included in upcoming progress reports and accessibility plans.

Summary of consultation findings

Below is a summary of consultation findings received in these sessions.

Employment

- Most employees have noticed “more focus on accessibility issues and the barriers that persons with disabilities may face” in 2023 at ISC.
- Some new employees with disabilities expressed that they have had very positive experiences in 2023 with hiring, accommodations and onboarding.
- Employees reported that wait times for some accommodations continue to be problematic.
- Employees shared that they would like ISC to have a continued focus on providing training on accessibility and disability. Employees would like to see more awareness about non-visible disabilities specifically.
- Some managers stated that they would like all managers to have further access to resources and training on accommodations and disability.
- Many employees expressed a desire for ISC to have additional organizational structures and resources to support accessibility.
- There is a desire within ISC to have a more intersectional approach and to create more alignment between accessibility and reconciliation. Further alignment with the Gender based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) analytical process should also be considered.
- Return to worksites and shared workspaces have created some issues for employees with disabilities. Employees requested that policies and processes related to workspaces further consider accessibility considerations.

Built environment

- Employees shared that they have noticed positive changes overall in the accessibility of the built environment at ISC.
- Employees would like more communication about plans for upcoming and future accessibility-related improvements that will be made to the built environment.
- Employees expressed a need for clarification and review of evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities, especially when considering working in different locations and workspaces.
- Employees cited a need for additional braille signage and tactile markers.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- The accessibility of GCdocs, the departmental application for the storage of electronic documents, is an issue for some employees with disabilities.
- Having an adequate office booking tool that shares information about accessibility of working stations is an issue for some employees with disabilities.
- Some employees have experienced recent issues with the MS Teams call-in option being disabled, which reduces accessibility for those who need to use that feature.

Communications, other than information and communication technologies

- Employees shared that they have noticed improvements in the accessibility of internal communications.
- Employees have appreciated any communications they receive regarding accessibility and disability. They would like there to be further ongoing communications about positive changes to accessibility at ISC.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

- Employees would like there to be less “red tape” to procure items that are needed for accessibility needs. This would likely involve reviewing processes and policies to ensure there is enough flexibility to accommodate individual needs of persons with disabilities.

Design and delivery of programs and services

- Engagement with external Indigenous partners is planned for 2024. This will inform the design and delivery of programs and services.

Transportation

- Employees shared challenges in parking and accessing ISC offices due to ongoing construction.
- It was noted that further consultation specifically with employees located in rural communities should occur in 2024 as they may face different barriers.
- Employees working in more rural areas shared that the space around the office such as parking lots and walkways to building entrances can present barriers when the snow is not adequately cleared.

Feedback

In 2023, feedback was submitted using ongoing feedback mechanisms through online form and through email. In total, ISC received four (4) comments related to the Accessibility Plan and seventeen (17) comments reporting barriers to accessibility. All feedback and comments were taken into consideration and actioned in any way possible, including the flagging of reported barriers to responsible leads within ISC.

Many of the barriers reported by employees involve the area of employment and built environment, including accommodation measures processes, disclosure of accommodation needs, and emerging barriers since 2022 in return to worksites procedures and in shared workspace renovations. The barriers reported through feedback largely echoed concerns shared through employee focus group sessions (refer to consultations section).

There was some feedback expressing concerns with language used in the opening message from the Deputy Ministers within the ISC Accessibility Plan. There is a need for greater collaboration with persons with disabilities when writing future Accessibility Plans.

Most reported barriers to accessibility in the area of built environment were submitted by employees in the National Capital Region. This meant that we have an underrepresentation of feedback from regional employees. This suggests future action to better engage employees to report environmental barriers in regional offices.

Most of the accessibility feedback that we received came from employees internal to the department, and only a few pieces of feedback came externally from Indigenous clients of ISC. The mandate of ISC is to provide services to Indigenous communities, which means that external feedback from these clients is very important to advancing accessibility in services. It is important to further promote feedback mechanisms with Indigenous clientele.

Glossary

The following definitions serve as a guide to better understand certain terms, but the list is not exhaustive. For additional definitions, please visit the [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#) or the [Accessibility Glossary](#).

Ableism: Prejudice and discrimination against people with a disability.

Accessibility: Accessibility means that all persons are able to access and use a product, a service, or an environment with ease. When something is inaccessible, it means that barriers exist.

Accommodation: In the context of work, a measure taken by management based on the personal circumstances of an employee that is designed to enable them to carry out their duties and fully participate in work-related activities. Some examples include new or modified equipment, software, devices, work schedules, tasks, or accessing captions.

Barrier: Refers to anything physical, technological, socioeconomic, cultural or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications, or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice that hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

Disabilities: Refers to any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, sensory impairment, or a functional limitation. A disability may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, and can be evident or not, and a person may have one or more disabilities.

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people that deprives them of or limits their access to opportunities and advantages that are available to other members of society.

Diversity: The variety of identities found within an organization, group or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, physical abilities and disabilities, family status or socioeconomic status.

Duty to accommodate: Refers to the employers and service providers legal obligation to adjust policies or practices, including the design and adaptation of the work environment, to meet the needs of an individual to enable them to fully participate. According to the Supreme Court of Canada, duty to accommodate refers to what is required in the circumstances of each case to avoid discrimination. Visit [Duty to Accommodate](#) for more information.

Equity: The principle of considering people's unique experiences and differing situations, and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Equity aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression.

Inclusion: The act of recognizing, valuing and building on differences in identity, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences and perspectives while respecting human rights.

Neurodivergent: Refers to a person with neurological functioning or behavioural traits that differ from what is considered typical.

Nothing about us without us: A guiding principle introduced in *Nothing Without Us: A Public Service Strategy on Accessibility* and adopted across the government of Canada to communicate the message that no policy should be decided by a representative without the full and direct participation of the members of the group affected by that policy.

Person with a disability or disabled person: A person with a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, sensory, learning or communication impairment, or a functional limitation, whether apparent or not, and permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, that hinders their full and equal participation in society when they face a barrier.

Systemic barrier: A barrier that results from seemingly neutral systems, practices, policies, traditions or cultures, and that disadvantages certain individuals or groups of people.