Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Accessibility Plan 2026 to 2028

Prepared by: Human Resources Branch

Table of contents

How to use this document

This accessibility plan outlines what we'll do over the next 3 years to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities. This plan is being published according to the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA or the Act).

This plan begins with a simple summary that outlines key information about our organization and our plans to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. After the summary, there's a longer plan that has more details about barriers and what we'll do to remove them. This plan is organized by headings that are required by the ACA.

You can choose to read just the summary, read the entire plan, or go straight to the sections you're most interested in.

If you need this report in a different format, see How to ask for alternate formats section of this accessibility plan.

Message from the Chairperson and the Champion for Accessibility and Persons with Disabilities

We are proud to share that the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB or the Board) has published its updated Accessibility Plan for 2026 to 2028.

This plan shows our commitment to make the IRB barrier-free and inclusive for persons with disabilities – whether they work here or appear before the Board.

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA or the Act) guides us in becoming barrier-free by 2040. This plan explains what we will do to find, remove, and prevent barriers. It works alongside the IRB's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and our Psychological Safety and Mental Health Strategy, because accessibility, equity, and mental health all go hand in hand.

Our first plan (2023–2025) taught us important lessons:

- Listening to employees matters.
- Accountability is key.
- Goals should be realistic and achievable.

This new plan builds on those lessons. We are focusing on actions that make the biggest difference, simplifying initiatives, and improving how we track and report progress.

We worked closely with employees and the Employees with Disabilities Network (EDN). Their feedback helped us design initiatives based on real experiences and needs. We also heard that the first plan focused more on external initiatives. This time, we are balancing internal and external priorities. One of our commitments in this plan is to figure out the best way to consult persons with disabilities who appear before the Board.

Accessibility is everyone's responsibility, and everyone's gain. Together, we will continue to create an organization that is respectful, inclusive, and accessible for all.

Manon Brassard
Chairperson

Catherine Smith
Champion for Accessibility and Persons with Disabilities

Summary of this accessibility plan

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB or the Board) published its first accessibility plan in December 2022. Since then, we've made progress and have continued to identify barriers that still exist for persons with disabilities who interact with the IRB, including members of the public and employees.

Our work is guided by the ACA, a federal law that aims to make Canada barrier-free by 2040. We're committed to meeting the requirements of the Act: to identify, remove and prevent barriers in 7 priority areas. The Act's priority areas are:

1. Employment
2. The built environment
3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)
4. Communication other than ICT
5. The procurement of goods, services, and facilities
6. The design and delivery of programs and services
7. Transportation

For a description of each priority area, see Our accessibility goals.

We're committed to creating a barrier-free IRB by 2040. This plan outlines the achievements we've made, what we've heard from persons with disabilities, barriers that we've identified and the actions that we'll take over the next 3 years to be more accessible.

To review the first accessibility plan, see IRB Accessibility Plan 2023-2025.

What we heard from persons with disabilities

Before developing this plan, we consulted with persons with disabilities. We invited all employees to participate in an online survey with an option to self-identify as a person with a disability. We also held one on one interviews with employees with disabilities to hear their feedback about accessibility at the IRB. In addition to the online survey and one on one interviews, we consulted with internal committees that represent and include employees with disabilities.

To learn more about what we heard from persons with disabilities, see the Consultations section of this accessibility plan.

Our accessibility goals

Here are the actions we're taking in the next 3 years to improve accessibility.

Culture goals

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 1: Foster accessibility awareness and disability confidence at the IRB.	November 2028

See culture section.

Employment goals

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 2: Review and implement changes to the current process through which employees request accommodation measures.	January 2028
Overarching goal 3: Increase awareness of the Government of Canada (GC) Accessibility Passport.	December 2028
Overarching goal 4: Update the IRB accessibility guidelines for assessing persons with disabilities related to selection processes.	March 2027

See employment section.

The built environment goals

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 5: Monitor and assess quiet spaces.	Starting in 2026 Annually

See built environment section.

Information and communication technologies goals

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 6: Develop a tailored accessibility training plan for IT pillars.	December 2028
Overarching goal 7: Streamline IT accommodation work with key partners.	December 2028
Overarching goal 8: Ensure that IRB PDF forms on external website and on intranet site are accessible.	December 2028

See information and communication technologies section.

Goals for communication, other than information and communication technologies

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 9: Explore the use of plain language in the Chairperson's guidelines.	December 2028

See communication, other than information and communication technologies section.

Goals for the procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Goal	Timeline
Overarching goal 10: Develop a tool to support managers to consider and prioritize accessibility in procurement.	December 2027

See procurement section.

Goals for the design and delivery of programs and services

Goal	Timeline
Overarching Goal 11: Implement the IRB guideline for accessible and inclusive training for the design and delivery of training to adjudicative staff.	December 2028
Overarching Goal 12: Identify key stakeholders for external engagement of persons with disabilities.	October 2028

See programs and services section.

Transportation goals

We've carefully reviewed our policies, practices, programs and services, and have determined that there are no barriers in the area of transportation, at this time.

See transportation section.

General

Our commitment to accessibility

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA or the Act) is a law meant to reduce barriers for persons with disabilities. The ACA has a goal to make Canada barrier-free by 2040. This is the IRB's second 3-year accessibility plan that outlines what we're doing to help achieve this goal.

Given we're an administrative tribunal, it's important that the IRB be as accessible as possible and that we remove barriers for employees with disabilities and for persons with disabilities who appear before the Board. Barriers to accessibility can affect how people can participate in IRB hearings and how they experience employment at the IRB. The IRB is committed to providing access to justice for everyone, which includes accessibility for persons with disabilities, both across the IRB and those appearing before it.

Through this commitment, the IRB can ensure that everyone is treated fairly and is able to interact with the IRB with dignity. It'll help ensure that everyone has access to our processes. By being more accessible we'll be able to better meet the needs of people who appear before the Board, including people who may be coming from traumatic experiences or have disabilities.

Accessibility is on-going work. It's a continuous process. It's the responsibility of everyone at the IRB. And it's the right thing to do.

About the IRB

The IRB is Canada's largest independent administrative tribunal. It is responsible for making well-reasoned decisions on immigration and refugee matters efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law. Our work provides access to justice to tens of thousands of people each year. Our work also contributes to the integrity of Canada's immigration and refugee systems.

As an independent administrative tribunal, the IRB is known for both (i) individual decision-maker (adjudicative) independence and (ii) a degree of institutional independence.

Our work is done in 4 separate tribunals, known as "divisions":

1. The Refugee Protection Division decides whether people who have claimed refugee protection in Canada can get that protection.

2. The Refugee Appeal Division decides appeals from decisions of the Refugee Protection Division.

3. The Immigration Division makes decisions about whether certain people who are not Canadian citizens are allowed into Canada, or could be removed from Canada, under the law. This division also reviews decisions made by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to detain someone.

4. The Immigration Appeal Division decides appeals on immigration-related matters including family sponsorships refused by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and removal orders issued by the Immigration Division or the CBSA. It also decides appeals from decisions made by IRCC relating to the removal of a person's permanent resident status based on whether they have spent enough days in Canada, under the law.

The IRB has some 2,700 employees across Canada. This includes about 575 decision-makers, called Members.

To learn more about the IRB, see About the Board.

How to contact us and share feedback

The IRB welcomes accessibility feedback from anyone who might interact with our organization. This could include employees, partners, people who appear before the Board and members of the public.

What can I give feedback about

You can give feedback about:

- this accessibility plan
- barriers you've encountered when interacting with the IRB

Feedback can be given anonymously.

Indicate if you'd like a reply and we'll contact you within 5 business days. All feedback received will be acknowledged in the same way it was received unless it was received anonymously.

How will my feedback be used

Your feedback will be shared with and considered by the teams responsible for accessibility at the IRB. It may be actioned while the current accessibility plan is in place, or it may be considered for a future plan. Plans are developed and published every 3 years.

A summary of your feedback and how it was considered will be included in our progress reports. We'll keep your feedback for at least 7 years.

How can I give feedback

If you'd like to share your feedback with us, you can contact the **Manager, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility** in the following ways:

- Email: irb.employmentequity-equiteenmatieredemploi.cisr@irb.cisr.gc.ca
- Phone: 1-833-931-5121
  Hours of operation: Monday – Friday, 8 am – 4 pm (ET)
- Mail:
  Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
  Attention: Manager, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility
  Minto Place, Canada Building

    344 Slater Street, 12th floor
    Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K1

- To submit your feedback anonymously:
    - use our online form: [Anonymous feedback form regarding accessibility](#)
    - submit your feedback anonymously through the methods listed above (phone and email)
- We'll also accept feedback about our accessibility plan and the accessibility of our services through direct messages on our various social media accounts.

How to ask for alternate formats

If you'd like this accessibility plan or a description of our feedback process in an alternative format, contact the Manager, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility using any of the following ways:

- Email: irb.employmentequity-equiteenmatieredemploi.cisr@irb-cisr.gc.ca
- Phone: 1-833-931-5121
  Hours of operation: Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm (ET)
- Mail:
  Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
  Attention: Manager, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility
  Minto Place, Canada Building
  344 Slater Street, 12th floor
  Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K1

When alternate formats will be ready

The following alternative formats are available upon request:

Within 15 days of request:

- **Print**
- **Large print** (increased font size)

Within 45 days of request:

- **Braille** (system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- **Audio** (recording of someone reading the text out loud)

Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this accessibility plan:

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies and rules in a way that allows all people, including persons with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

Accommodations: Adjustments to rules, policies, practices or environments that remove barriers for an individual.

Barrier: Anything – including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that's based on information or communications or anything that's the result of a policy or a practice – that hinders the full and equal participation of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Disability: Any impairment, including physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

People who appear before the Board: Any person who needs a decision from the IRB (also called "the Board"), and their representatives. Those who need a decision from the Board include people making refugee claims, people appealing immigration decisions, people who are being detained, and people outside Canada who are waiting for a decision on their ability to enter or remain in Canada. The representatives can include lawyers or anyone representing a person who needs a decision from the Board.

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to make web content accessible to persons with disabilities. Web content generally refers to the information in a web page or web application, including:

- natural information such as text, images, and sounds
- code or markup that defines structure, presentation, etc.

Federal departments, agencies, and organizations are required to follow WCAG 2.0 AA and are strongly encouraged to follow WCAG 2.1 Level AA. For more information on WCAG standards, see WCAG 2 Overview | Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) | W3C.

List of acronyms

The following acronyms apply throughout this accessibility plan:

ACA: Accessible Canada Act

AAACT: Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology

CACDI: Chairperson's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

CBSA: Canada Border Services Agency

EDN: Employees with Disabilities Network

ICT: Information and Communications Technologies

IRB: Immigration and Refugee Board

IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

PSC: Public Service Commission

PSPC: Public Services and Procurement Canada

SSC: Shared Services Canada

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Consultations

It's important to ensure that our work is guided by the feedback and voices of persons with disabilities. We're committed to listening to persons with disabilities and learning about their needs and priorities. The IRB consulted with persons with disabilities to help us identify barriers and develop this plan.

We invited all employees to participate in an anonymous survey with an option to self-identify as a person with a disability. We also held one on one interviews with employees with disabilities to hear their feedback. Employees had the choice to have the interview with someone at the IRB or with an independent third-party consulting firm to help maintain confidentiality for those employees:

- We received 54 responses to the employee survey.
- 27 or 50% of responses indicated that the employee self-identifies as a person with a disability.
- 8 employees participated in the one-on-one interviews.

We also consulted with the IRB's Employees with Disabilities Network (EDN), inviting them to participate in confidential one on one interviews, and we consulted with the Chairperson's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CACDI) (which includes employees with disabilities). We also reviewed the feedback received through the IRB's Accessibility [Anonymous Comment Box](#). During our consultations, employees with disabilities were asked to share their perspectives on the level of accessibility at the IRB, any barriers that they've encountered or are aware of, and potential solutions.

The feedback we received included some positive aspects about accessibility at the IRB, but we understand that several challenges still exist for employees with disabilities.

The main barriers reported by employees were:

- Inconsistent awareness about accessibility and disability across different employees and teams at the IRB.
- Workspaces aren't accessible for all employees (for example, open work areas can be noisy and very distracting, there are limited quiet or enclosed work areas, lighting can be hard and not easily adjustable).
- There are challenges with the accommodations process (for example, long response times, limited collaboration with the employee during the process, a lack of clarity and reason about when medical documents are needed).
- There are challenges for employees with disabilities during the return to office process. Working in the office on a regular basis instead of working virtually from home can lead to barriers for some employees with disabilities.
- Some employees reported that they have experienced negative attitudes or stigma from colleagues or their managers.
- Not all IRB employees know how to create accessible documents.
- There's a lack of awareness among employees about accessibility related resources, guides and tools that exist at the IRB.

Note: The IRB didn't consult with members of the public or persons with disabilities who have appeared before the Board when developing this plan. One of our goals in this plan is to determine how we can consult with persons with disabilities who appear before the Board in the future.

Our accessibility goals

Each of the following sections include an overview of each ACA priority area, achievements to date, identified barriers and actions that IRB will commit to, to improve accessibility in 2026 to 2028. The 7 priority areas are:

- **Employment**: ensuring that our workplace is accessible for current employees and for potential employees who take part in our hiring process.
- **Built environment**: making our buildings and physical locations accessible. This includes accessible workspaces, elevators, ramps, signage and wide doorways.
- **Information and communication technologies (ICT):** ensuring that the technologies and digital tools that we use are accessible. For example, the organization website, apps, electronic documents.

- **Communication, other than ICT**: ensuring that information that we share is easily understood. This can include the use of plain language, captions for videos, and access to alternative formats such as braille.

- **Procurement (buying goods and services)**: ensuring that when we make purchases, that they can be easily used by everyone. For example, choosing to buy adjustable furniture or accessible software.

- **Design and delivery of programs and services**: making sure that the services we offer are easy to use for everyone. This could mean offering multiple ways that the public can interact with us.

- **Transportation**: ensuring that travel is inclusive.

In addition to the ACA priority areas, we've also included another priority area, which is culture.

- **Culture:** establishing a deep-rooted culture of accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

Culture

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to culture at the IRB. To be successful in each of the priority areas of the ACA, we need to establish a deep-rooted culture of accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities. This aligns with our broader commitment at the Board to foster a positive and healthy workplace culture, characterized by collaboration, fairness, and a true sense of belonging. This is why we've added an additional priority area to our accessibility plan.

Achievements to date

This is a new priority area for the IRB, and we look forward to reporting on achievements to date in our annual progress reports and renewed accessibility plans.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- Inconsistent awareness about accessibility and disabilities across the IRB. This includes understanding about different types of disabilities (visible and invisible), knowledge about how to incorporate accessibility into day-to-day practices, and in some cases demonstrating sensitivity to disability-related needs (attitudinal barriers).

- Not all employees are aware of the accessibility resources, guides and tools that already exist at the IRB.

- Some employees say that they're reluctant to disclose that they have a disability or talk about their disability-related needs at work. They feel like other people won't understand them or might judge them negatively.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following actions:

Overarching goal 1: Foster accessibility awareness and disability confidence.

Our vision is to establish a deep-rooted culture of accessibility and inclusivity. This vision begins with a culture shift at the IRB that prioritizes accessibility and disability awareness.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Continuing in 2026, the Chairperson will send a yearly message to all employees that highlights the Accessibility Plan and the IRB's commitment to becoming barrier free by 2040.
- Starting in June 2026, we'll create and deliver accessibility training on a regular basis for managers and supervisors. We'll deliver at least 1 training session in each of the years 2026, 2027 and 2028.
- Starting in June 2026, we'll lead drop-in sessions about accessibility topics every 3 months. Participation will be voluntary, and any IRB employee will be welcome to attend.
- Starting in 2026, we'll create and deliver digital accessibility training for all IRB employees. We'll deliver at least 1 training session in each of the years 2026, 2027 and 2028.
- Starting in 2026, we'll provide regular reminders to all employees that the materials and documents they create must be accessible. When we provide these reminders, we'll also remind them about the resources we have available about accessible documents. We'll provide these reminders at least 4 times a year in 2026 and may reduce how often we send reminders after that if we find the reminders are no longer needed.
- By 2028, we'll make sure that accessibility resources and trainings are easily found in a central location.

Employment

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that relate to employment at the IRB We're committed to accessibility and inclusion in our talent strategy and hiring practices. This includes current employees and potential employees. Every 6 months, we monitor the self-identification data against the Government of Canada's [employment equity group workforce availability](#) data. We've increased the overall number of employees with disabilities at the IRB and the number of employees with disabilities in the Executive group at the IRB is now above the workforce availability for that group. However, the overall number of employees with disabilities at the IRB is lower than the workforce availability of persons with disabilities. We've made progress in our employment practices, however, recognize that barriers still exist for employees.

Achievements to date

We've made the following progress to date:

- We developed internal standards and guidelines on the accessibility of training. This will help ensure that training that's created or purchased by the IRB follow accessibility standards.
- We introduced the [Government of Canada's Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) (or "Accessibility Passport"). The Accessibility Passport is a tool to support public service employees with disabilities. It helps to simplify and improve how accommodations are identified, agreed to, and followed through during a person's employment in the federal public service.
- We've made improvements on the language used in our job postings. Job postings now clearly state that accommodations are available for candidates.
- We launched an anticipatory selection process only open to persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.
- Through the [GC Jobs platform](#), we launched an inventory specifically for federal public service employees who self-declare as belonging to the employment equity group: persons with disabilities to be considered for lateral movement opportunities.

- We developed an internal IRB guide on inclusive and accessible job posters.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- Some employees with disabilities have experienced challenges when requesting accommodations or participating in the accommodation process. This includes challenges with inconsistent manager knowledge and confidence in handling requests, long response times, lack of clarity on when medical documentation is required and a lack of collaboration with the employee who is making the request. Managers and employees do not fully understand the accommodations process, and they sometimes cannot access functional experts to help them.

- The Accessibility Passport isn't widely used in the organization. There's low awareness about the Accessibility Passport from both managers and employees.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 2: Review and implement changes to the current process through which employees request accommodation measures.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll conduct a review of the current internal accommodations process. In this review, we'll look for gaps in our current policies and practices. We'll compare our current process against best practices that have been established across the Government of Canada. We plan to finish this review by May 2026.

- Once this review is finished, we'll consult the EDN about our findings and ask for feedback on how we can improve the accommodations process. We'll also consult the CACDI. We plan to complete this by September 2026.

- Once the consultations are complete, we'll develop a proposal on how we can improve the accommodations process. We plan to complete this by March 2027.

- Starting in 2027, we'll begin to establish a new accommodation process based on what we learned from our review and the feedback from employees with disabilities. Once the new accommodation process is established, we'll inform all employees about the changes and the new simplified accommodation process. We'll make sure that all the resources our managers and employees will need, related to the process, are in an easy to find and central location. This will support a collaborative accommodations process between managers and employees. We plan to launch this new process by July 2028.

Overarching goal 3: Increase awareness of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll develop a proposal about how we could promote the use of the Accessibility Passport across the IRB. This work is a continuation of our previous efforts to promote the Accessibility Passport at the IRB, which has included presentations to the EDN and a communication to all employees.

- Once the proposal is developed, we'll continue to consult with employees with disabilities by seeking feedback from the EDN. We'll update the proposal based on what we learned from this feedback. We plan to complete this by November 2026.

- Starting in November 2026, we'll begin to implement the actions listed on the proposal to better promote the Accessibility Passport across the IRB.

Overarching goal 4: Update the IRB accessibility guidelines for assessing persons with disabilities related to selection processes.

The IRB is required to follow policies established by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC is currently updating their Guide for assessing persons with disabilities during a selection process (for example, when someone applies for a job at the IRB). Once the Guide is finalized, the IRB will be required to implement the PSC's recommendations.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Once the PSC Guide for assessing persons with disabilities is ready, we'll update the IRB guideline about how persons with disabilities are assessed during a selection process. This will be completed in consultation with the IRB Champion of Accessibility and Persons with Disabilities. We plan to complete this by March 2027.

The built environment

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to the built environment at the IRB. The IRB has a head office located in Ottawa. We have regional offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Etobicoke, and Montreal. We also operate in other physical spaces, such as detention facilities.

We're committed to the accessibility of our locations and continue to work with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to address barriers in our built environments. PSPC is the federal agency that purchases (or leases) and manages properties for many parts of the government, including many of the IRB's buildings. Some of these spaces are the responsibility of CBSA, who is responsible for the flow of travellers and goods in and out of Canada.

Achievements to date

We've made the following progress to date:

- Accessibility is a core consideration for all new office space decisions and plans. For example, a building was renovated in Toronto (25 St. Clair Ave E), which includes IRB offices. Accessibility was a core consideration, and the Toronto office is a good model of a fully accessible location.
- We've continued to work with the IRB's accessibility advisor to identify and plan improvements to our built environment. We work closely with the advisor to implement approved accommodation requests related to the built environment.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- There are limited quiet workspaces and enclosed offices available for employees. Most workspaces are in open-concept work areas which could be a barrier for employees with disabilities without an accommodation measure in place. These workspaces can be noisy and distracting.
- Employees reported that office spaces don't always have accessibility features that could benefit some employees with disabilities.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 5: Monitor and assess quiet spaces.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll monitor and assess the availability of additional quiet rooms and quiet work areas. When new quiet spaces become available, we'll communicate this information to employees. We'll also communicate any new accessibility features that become available, such as automatic door push plates and safety dome mirrors for high traffic areas.
- Starting in 2026, we'll conduct a review of all space assignments and requirements. This includes reviewing how our workspaces are allocated, for what purposes and if there's flexibility for changes. This review will be completed once every year, in 2026, 2027 and 2028.

Information and communication technologies

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to information and communication technologies at the IRB. We use a variety of technologies and digital tools. This includes our public website and social media platforms, as well as the internal IRB intranet website and digital tools employees use to do their work.

Achievements to date

- We've made the following progress to date: We've developed a partnership with the [Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology](#) (AAACT) team at Shared Services Canada (SSC). We'll continue to build this partnership to leverage the resources, tools, and adaptive technologies available for employees with disabilities.
- We've hired a new accessibility coordinator in the information management and information technology team.
- We conduct ongoing website testing for our public website and our intranet website. This testing ensures that our public website and intranet website content is following best practices for accessible websites. This has been an ongoing practice; we've adopted artificial intelligence and Microsoft Clarity software that allows this testing to be automated.
- We've ensured that all web pages meet WCAG 2.1 level AA and sometimes will also meet AAA.
- We've made progress in reviewing all PDF forms on the website, to make sure they're accessible. This continues to be an ongoing commitment.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- Not all employees know how to create accessible documents at the IRB.
- There's a lack of customized accessibility training for each IT team at the IRB (we refer to them as "IT pillars").
- When new technology accommodation requests are made, we consult with the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program. We then review their recommendations and determine how to proceed. Accommodation requests for technologies that are not yet pre-approved sometimes have long delays in the approvals process. The process itself can be overly complicated, involving multiple groups.

- Internal documents may not consistently be in accessible formats.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 6: Develop a tailored accessibility training plan for IT pillars.

There are 5 different areas within IRB's information technology program that each serve a different function. We've recognized that for all our information and communications technology processes to be accessible, we need each of our teams to receive training that's customized to their area within information technology.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll identify the roles and accessibility goals for each IT pillar. This will help us in doing an assessment of the training needs for each identified role. We hope to complete these actions by December 2026.

- Starting in 2026, we'll create an inventory of IT training offerings that might already exist within the IRB or through our partners. We'll then evaluate the trainings available and assess if they meet the training needs we've identified. We plan to complete these actions by December 2026.

- Starting in 2027, we'll create a training plan for the role-specific training that'll be required. This plan will outline the training topics needed for each role. We'll also develop a process to track who completes the training. We plan to complete these actions by December 2028.

Overarching goal 7: Streamline IT accommodation work with key partners.

We'll streamline the IT accommodation process to make the process easier for employees and reduce the delays.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll begin identifying the key partners within the IRB that need to collaborate. We'll also look to collaborate with AAACT.

- Once all key partners are identified, we'll map out all the current steps in the IT accommodations workflow. This will help us identify gaps or inefficiencies in the process. We plan to complete this by the end of 2026.

- Starting in 2027, we'll determine ways in which the IT accommodation process can be standardized, to address the gaps and inefficiencies identified. We plan to complete this by the end of 2027.

- Once the new accommodation work process is developed, we'll ensure that it is communicated widely to employees, and training is provided to all IT staff who will be involved in this work.

- Starting in 2026, we'll develop a catalogue of pre-approved technologies, to decrease delays when any technologies are requested as an accommodation. The efforts to develop a pre-approved catalogue will be ongoing.

Overarching goal 8: Ensure that IRB PDF forms on external website and on intranet site are accessible

This goal is a continuation of our work from the 2023-2025 accessibility plan. It aims to ensure that all IRB PDF forms (both external and internal) are fully compliant with the latest accessibility standards, including WCAG 2.0 and the Government of Canada's Standard on Web Accessibility.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Continuing our work that started in 2023, we'll continue to make changes to the PDF forms that we identified as not accessible to improve accessibility. This work will be ongoing through 2027 and 2028.

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to communications and communication practices at the IRB. The IRB will adopt plain language communication as much as possible, as it supports accessibility for a wide range of readers. Plain language means writing or speaking so your audience can easily understand what you mean. We recognize that legal language, which we have to use sometimes because of the nature of our work, may be used alongside plain language.

Achievements to date

We've made the following progress to date:

- We've produced and published an accessible and plain language video series that explains the refugee claim process.
- We started a review of our public website content for plain language, and the main 3 levels of the website have now been completed.
- We've developed accessible document templates, to be used across the IRB.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- Internal and external documents are often not in plain language.
- Use of legal language in our documents and hearings can be a barrier for people who need a decision from the IRB, including persons with disabilities. The use of legal language rather than plain language could mean that some people don't understand the information that they need to interact with the IRB.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 9: Explore the use of plain language in the Chairperson's guidelines.

We heard from our consultations that legal language in our documents can be a barrier for persons with disabilities. As a starting point, we'll consider 1 of the 7 Chairperson's guidelines to assess, determine and then pilot a more accessible approach, including the use of plain language. Chairperson's guidelines assist decision-makers and staff in carrying out their duties. Decision-makers are expected to apply Chairperson's guidelines or explain why they're not following them. While Chairperson's guidelines are for decision-makers and staff, the guidelines also communicate this information to the public, so they know what is expected of decision-makers. This pilot will explore opportunities where we can use plain language to improve accessibility without replacing the sometimes complex and specialised nature of information that decision-makers consider in the Chairperson's guidelines. The pilot would assess the most effective approach to improve accessibility, which may include developing plain language summaries that explain the purpose, relevance, and practical implication of selected guideline in plain language. The approach will ensure that we don't create duplicate documents. After we complete this

pilot, we'll reflect on our lessons learned. If the approach was successful, we'll develop an action plan on how to approach improving accessibility by using plain language for other Chairperson's guidelines.

To accomplish this goal, while ensuring the proper balance between accessibility and practical application and preventing potential misapplications, misinterpretations and inaccuracies, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll work to identify the Chairperson's guideline best suited for the pilot to assess the most effective approach to improve the accessibility of Chairperson guidelines with plain language without creating duplicate documents. This will include defining the scope and criteria for selecting the guideline to be piloted and establishing principles for plain language adaptation, including how to preserve legal integrity while improving accessibility. We'll gather information about the current context (an "environmental scan") to ensure that we understand best practices, resources available, risks and opportunities when considering accessibility of the legal language used in Chairperson's guidelines, including through internal and external consultations. We plan to complete this by the end of 2026.

- Starting in 2027, we'll develop a plan to pilot the approach on the selected Chairperson's guideline. We plan to complete this by the end of 2027.

- Starting in 2028, we'll implement our pilot on the selected Chairperson's guidelines. We plan to complete this by the end of 2028.

The procurement of goods, services and facilities

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to procurement at the IRB. IRB often buys goods and services that support our operations. The process of buying is called "procurement". We follow the standards set by PSPC and the Treasury Board Secretariat when it comes to procurement. It's important that accessibility be considered from the start when making purchases. Accessible products means that more people can use them easily.

Achievements to date

We've made the following progress to date:

- In our internal Procurement request form, there's a checklist for required information, which now includes accessibility. We've added a question in the form that asks if accessibility considerations were included in the project, and if not, to provide a justification.

Identified barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- The IRB Procurement request form has a question regarding accessibility considerations. Despite a link in the form that directs readers to guidance on how to consider accessibility in procurement, it was reported that this step is still unclear.

- The current procurement decision-making process may not consider accessibility as part of bidder scoring. Bidder scoring means rating each vendor's bid to see how well it meets the procurement requirements.

- Instructions and requirements for bidders might not currently include accessibility requirements.

- Some of our employees who participate in the procurement process don't have the knowledge they need to make sure that goods, services and facilities they purchase are accessible to persons with disabilities. Training, education and further resources are needed.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 10: Develop a tool to support managers to consider and prioritize accessibility in procurement.

We'll develop a tool to support and encourage our staff to consider and prioritize accessibility whenever they purchase new goods, services or facilities. We'll consult with other government departments and key stakeholders to develop a tool that'll help managers consider accessibility when purchasing goods and services.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll consult with other government departments and key stakeholders to assess what resources exist to support accessible procurement. We'll also seek more information on what topic areas we'll focus on for the procurement tool. Potential topics could be how to ensure that the good or service being purchased is accessible, what accessibility information is required from bidders, how to consider accessibility as part of the bidding scoring process and the accessibility of procurement documents. We'll complete the consultations by December 2026.
- Starting in 2027, we'll begin to draft the procurement tool. Once it's done, we plan to have it published and in use by December 2027.

The design and delivery of programs and services

In this section, we've identified barriers and actions that are related to the programs and services that the IRB operates. The IRB is an administrative tribunal. That means it's less formal than the courts but has specialized knowledge in a particular area of law. Our main purpose is to hear and make decisions on immigration and refugee cases. In this role, the IRB interacts with people who appear before the Board. We do this in lots of different ways, including discussions, forms, documents, hearings, and decisions.

We regularly interact with 2 groups:

- lawyers and other representatives for people appearing before the IRB.
- people who need a decision from the IRB. This second group includes people making refugee claims (called "claimants"), people appealing immigration and refugee decisions (called "appellants"), people who are being detained (called "detainees"), and people who are waiting for a decision on their ability to enter or remain in Canada (called "applicants."). This second group of people sometimes are self-represented (also called "unrepresented") which means that they don't have lawyers or other representatives.

We're committed to addressing any inaccessible systems or structures that we have, including adopting trauma-informed approaches to adjudication, as required. Trauma-informed means recognizing that people may have experienced difficult events and it is important to interact with them with respect and sensitivity.

Achievements to date

We've made the following progress to date:

- We've developed and implemented plain language style guides for some divisions and training related to accessibility.
- We've developed a guide that outlines how accessibility for people with disabilities should be considered and factored into our proceedings and hearings. This guide is called the

Chairperson's Guideline 8: Accessibility to IRB Proceedings. Chairperson's guidelines assist decision-makers and staff in carrying out their duties. Guidelines also communicate this information to the public, so they know what is expected of decision-makers. Decision-makers are expected to apply Chairperson's guidelines or explain why they're not following them.

Identified Barriers

We've identified the following barriers:

- People who need a decision from the Board and their representatives were not consulted directly as part of IRB's consultation process, in preparation for the development of this plan. They can however submit feedback through our website if needed. The IRB continuously monitors any feedback received from this group.

- Accessibility training within the programs/services teams is not consistent and is voluntary.

Actions for 2026 to 2028

We'll commit to the following goals:

Overarching goal 11: Implement the IRB guidelines for accessible and inclusive training for the design and delivery of training to adjudicative staff.

In our first plan, we developed and published guidelines for accessible and inclusive training and accompanying supporting documents which include frequently asked questions and reference guides. Adjudicative staff have reported that the adjudicative training is not accessible for all learners. Therefore, we'll redesign the training program to ensure to the extent possible it meets the IRB guidelines.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll analyze the current training context, looking at facilitator and learner feedback, conduct training observations and review best practices to determine steps to inform training design and facilitation.

- Starting in 2026, we'll put together a training advisory group to discuss gaps, recommendations for improvement and training for adjudicative training designers and facilitators.

- Starting in 2026, we'll develop a training workshop or mini-course for training content designers (those who create professional development and new member training and specialized member training programs) to ensure they're aware of how to design training with accessibility in mind.

- Starting in 2027, we'll develop a training workshop or mini-course for facilitators of adjudicative training to ensure to the extent possible that their delivery of training is in line with the IRB guidelines for accessible and inclusive training. We plan to complete this work by December 2027.

- Starting in 2028, we'll review training evaluations submitted by employees to ensure that the new design and delivery of adjudicative training has addressed to the extent possible previous feedback on accessible training delivery. We plan to complete the evaluation by December 2028 with recommendations for improvements.

Overarching goal 12: Identify key stakeholders for external engagement of persons with disabilities.

As noted in the identified barriers, members of the public were not consulted during IRB's accessibility planning process. It has been difficult for us to figure out the best way to reach out to and consult with people who appear before the Board. Our hope is to spend time over the next few years investigating our options and putting together a plan for how this group can be consulted.

To accomplish this goal, we'll take the following actions:

- Starting in 2026, we'll search for external organizations who we could consult on accessibility. We plan to engage with these organizations in 2027.
- Starting in 2028, based on the consultation findings, we'll draft a plan on how we can engage with external organizations to consult with persons with disabilities who appear before the Board. We plan to complete this by October 2028.

Transportation

We've carefully reviewed our policies, practices, programs and services, and have determined that there are no barriers in the area of transportation, at this time.

Conclusion

The IRB is committed to identifying, preventing and removing barriers for all persons who interact with our organization, especially persons with disabilities. The overarching goals and actions outlined in this plan are an important step in the next phase of our accessibility journey.

We commit to rigorous monitoring and reporting for the IRB Accessibility plan 2026 to 2028. It will include clear accountabilities, detailed workplans, clear expected outcomes and results for each initiative. We've developed an internal project management tracker to ensure that we're meeting our required milestones to achieve the overarching goals. Our Accessibility Planning and Implementation Committee will meet monthly to ensure accountability and to solve any problems that arise. Our annual progress reports will outline the status of each action. We'll also continue to keep our EDN and CACDI informed and involved in the implementation process of this plan.

We recognize that implementing the actions in this plan will require diligence and dedication. We look forward to continuing this work and continuing to receive feedback from persons with disabilities to guide our journey to becoming barrier free by 2040.