



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Accessibility Plan 2025 to 2027



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Accessibility Plan 2025 to 2027

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For more information reach us at agriculture.canada.ca or call us toll-free 1-855-773-0241.



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General

Accessibility statement

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is committed to becoming fully accessible and inclusive. While progress has been made, there is still work ahead to become a department without barriers.

This is AAFC's second accessibility plan. It will help us keep improving accessibility in a clear and lasting way, following the areas set out in the Accessible Canada Act.

We will approach this responsibility by listening, learning, and acting. As we work to put this plan in place, we will continue to count on feedback from our employees, people with lived experience, and other stakeholders.

Our department will work hard to put this plan in place in a way that respects the principles of the [Accessible Canada Act](#):

- dignity
- equal opportunities
- access without barriers
- meaningful options
- involving people with disabilities in the development and design of our policies, programs, services, and structures
- recognizing that people can be excluded and discriminated against for more than one reason at the same time (intersectionality)
- achieving the highest level of accessibility

AAFC is committed to promoting best practices in accessibility. At the time of posting, this page meets the accessibility standard using version 2.2, level AA of the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#). This standard is a recommendation from the [Government of Canada Guideline on Making Information Technology Usable by All](#).

The Accessible Canada Act sets a 3-year planning and reporting cycle. The Accessible Canada Regulations identify the following deadlines:



- year 1: publish accessibility plan and feedback process (December 2025)
- year 2: publish progress report on implementing the accessibility plan and feedback received (December 2026)
- year 3: publish a second progress report (December 2027)

Together, AAFC employees from all levels of the department are working to implement this accessibility plan across the areas of accessibility outlined in the Accessible Canada Act.

This accessibility plan is our formal pledge to employees and those we serve. Our department is committed to creating accessible environments, services, and experiences where everyone can belong, and everyone feels valued and respected.

Feedback

You can send your feedback using the [online form](#) or by email, phone or mail using the contact information listed below.

We have designated our Associate Director of Accessibility and Employee Wellness, Human Resources Branch, to receive feedback on behalf of the department.

You can use our feedback process to share your comments and ideas. We invite your feedback on:

- our accessibility plan
- how we are putting the plan in place
- any barriers that you may encounter when working for us or in communicating with us or accessing our programs and services
- our feedback process

You can send feedback anonymously or you can include your name and contact information.

We will use this feedback to produce our progress reports and to create our next accessibility plan.

Alternate Formats



You can use the contact information listed below to ask us for a copy of our accessibility plan and our feedback process description in these alternate formats:

- print
- large print
- Braille
- audio or an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist people with disabilities

We will provide the format you ask for as soon as possible. Braille and audio formats may take up to 45 days. Print, large print and electronic formats may take up to 15 days.

Contact us

For more information, to provide feedback, or to request an alternate format of this Plan, the Progress Report, or the description of our feedback process, you can contact us in one of the following ways:

- [Fill the online feedback form](#)
- Send an email to aaqc.accessibility-accessibilite.aac@agr.gc.ca
- Call by telephone at 1-855-545-9575
- Send mail to:

Accessibility Office
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5

You can send feedback anonymously or you can include your name and contact information.

We will confirm that we have received your feedback in the way it was received, unless sent anonymously, or if an alternative preference is identified.



Message from the Deputy Minister

Accessibility is essential to building a more inclusive and effective public service. Accessibility is not just a legal obligation under the Accessible Canada Act, it is a reflection of the kind of public service we strive to be. One that values diversity, removes barriers, and enables full participation.

The Department's new accessibility plan sets our goals, key actions and expected outcomes for the next 3 years. It builds on the work of our first accessibility plan and will lead to improvements in accessibility for employees and the Canadians we serve.

The development of this plan, led by AAFC's Accessibility Office, was informed by meaningful consultations with people with disabilities and partners across the Department. These conversations have shaped our plan's priorities. It keeps the focus on lived experience and builds on what matters most to our citizens.

To create lasting change, accessibility must be part of how we lead, plan, and make decisions. Over the next 3 years, we will help our leaders make accessibility a core part of how we work. This will help improve how we track progress and stay accountable, so everyone can see the results of our efforts.

We are committed as an organization to work towards equal opportunities to succeed and contribute to the growth and development of the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Together, guided by this plan, we are moving toward a stronger, more inclusive department, and a more accessible public service.

Lawrence Hanson

Deputy Minister



Message from the Persons with Disabilities Network

Nothing Without Us: How we're changing the way people see disability

The Persons with Disabilities Network aims to change the way people see disability. It does not need fixing, instead it is the key to improving the world around us for everyone. If we want a more creative, caring, and unbiased Canada then we need the people we exclude, to show us a new way forward.

Everyone experiences disability in a different way. So, it is important to listen to each person's story and respect their lived experience. Together, these stories show us how to include everyone and treat them with dignity. They guide us to come up with new and better ways to design technology, rules, and spaces.

Removing barriers is essential. When environments and systems respect everyone's dignity and rights, everyone wins. When we value differences, we move forward together as a stronger, fairer society. This pushes us to come up with new and better ways to design technology, rules, and spaces that are inclusive.

As co-chairs, we focus on these 7 main areas:

1. **Representation:** Making sure leaders listen to our community and our concerns. We hold them accountable to think about our needs when making rules or decisions.
2. **Community:** Creating a safe and welcoming place where no one feels alone. People can share, help each other, and find useful information.
3. **Education:** Helping everyone understand disability better to end unfair ideas and treatment.
4. **Awareness:** Raising awareness about disability-related issues and myth busting.
5. **Accessibility:** Working with our Accessibility Office team to improve accessibility for everyone. Together we find and fix the barriers that make it hard for people to do their jobs and succeed. We help get rid of physical obstacles, technology



problems, and unfair attitudes. Together we are making better rules and ways of doing things.

6. **Job fairness:** Helping people with disabilities get hired and grow in their careers. We must follow Canadian laws and goals. This way we ensure employees with disabilities are always treated with fairness.
7. **Advocacy:** Building disability confidence. Making sure everyone gets timely support when they need it. Ensuring we continue to progress by working hand in hand with our top leaders. Advising them how to make our workplace inclusive, kinder, and better for everyone. All employees are welcome to join our network, to join email us at aafc.pwdn-rpsh.aac@agr.gc.ca.

Pamela Warburton and Elaine Howlett

Co-chairs of the Persons with Disabilities Network



Consultations

Consulting for the plan

For the purposes of the Accessible Canada Act and its regulations, the consultation process refers to the input AAFC receives when consulting people with disabilities as we prepare our accessibility plans and progress reports. Consultation is a focused, time-limited process designed to gather input directly related to these documents. This consultation input differs from the feedback our department receives through our ongoing feedback process. Feedback can be provided by anyone, at any time, about accessibility barriers, our plans, or ways we can improve accessibility in our workplace.

Consultations for this plan began with the Persons with Disabilities Network. The Accessibility Office meets regularly with the network co-chairs to discuss topics related to accessibility, such as the accessibility plan or barriers impacting people with disabilities. In 2025, a survey directed towards employees with disabilities provided additional input on high-priority areas for the plan. Our Accessibility Office created the survey and shared it in different accessible formats through the Persons with Disabilities Network over a 2 week period.

Based on the survey input, AAFC's Accessibility Office co-developed actions with stakeholders across branches, regions, and governance committees to ensure commitments reflect both lived experience and operational realities.

AAFC took part in the Better Accommodation Project (BAP), a 1 year initiative led by the Deputy Minister Champion for Employees with Disabilities. The goal was to make it easier for public servants with disabilities to get workplace accommodations. AAFC used a structured review of the Duty to Accommodate process, involving more than 180 employees with disabilities and managers. In the first audit, participants completed a survey about the time, cost, and ease of the process, and then joined focus groups to discuss the results and why certain steps were hard or inefficient. In the second audit, AAFC tested new tools (prototypes) to see if they helped remove barriers. Employees and managers tried the tools, completed sample steps, and gave feedback on how long tasks would take and how easy they were. Tests included people with and without experience in the accommodation process. The results from this work helped identify key barriers and actions included in our accessibility plan.

Moving forward, we will improve on how we consult people with disabilities by creating a framework that ensures engagement is fair, inclusive, and long-lasting. This framework



will focus on centering lived experience, reducing consultation fatigue, and building meaningful, accessible ways to continue the conversation.

What we heard

Through consultations, surveys, and the BAP, participants shared clear feedback about accessibility at AAFC. Barriers identified included:

- extensive delays, inconsistent processes, unclear responsibilities, and stressful experiences when requesting support
- people with disabilities remain underrepresented across roles and levels, with uneven access to development opportunities
- there is a need for more knowledge on accessibility, accommodation, and inclusive practices. Many employees highlighted the importance of fostering understanding, not just compliance
- content, tools, and hybrid meeting practices often do not meet accessibility standards, with opportunities to provide feedback on communication described as limited and not always valued
- physical accessibility varies across sites, and accessibility is not always considered in procurement processes
- employees with non-apparent disabilities, or those facing multiple forms of discrimination, reported added challenges and stigma

Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that progress is possible. They highlighted clearer processes, stronger training, improved accountability, and consistent follow-through as the most effective ways to enhance accessibility.

The areas of our accessibility plan

In line with the priority areas of the Accessible Canada Act, we have identified our key commitments to help build a Canada without barriers by 2040. Our planned actions are organized under the Accessible Canada Act's 7 areas of accessibility.

The commitments identified in this plan will be supported by ongoing implementation and delivery plans for each priority area, along with continuous engagement and collaboration with people with disabilities.



1. Employment

Goal

Our goal is to create a workplace where employees feel empowered and equipped at each stage of their career.

Barriers related to employment identified during consultations:

- the process to request and manage accommodation solutions is often unclear and complicated (examples: too much paperwork, poor communication, support that is not respectful or fair, or individual needs not considered)
- employees with disabilities may face barriers to advancing their careers and may have less access to training or growth opportunities

How will we get there:

- **Action 1:** AAFC will create an accessibility policy based on guiding principles of the social model of disability and the Accessible Canada Act
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will have a clear policy that promotes accessibility using the social model of disability
- **Action 2:** AAFC will develop a toolkit to support the accessibility policy, using lessons learned from participating in the BAP and Government of Canada (GC) Workplace Accessibility Passport digital solution pilot
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will have tools to support employees and managers incorporate accessibility considerations in their work
- **Action 3:** AAFC will identify and make changes to reduce or remove the identified barriers to career development for people with disabilities
 - **Outcomes:**
 - AAFC will identify barriers that limit career development opportunities for people with disabilities
 - AAFC will ensure that people with disabilities have equitable access to career development opportunities. Employees feel supported in balancing accommodation needs with professional growth



- **Action 4:** AAFC will recognize contributions to accessibility
 - **Outcome:** Celebrate and promote meaningful contributions that improve accessibility across our department
- **Action 5:** Implement AAFC's BAP report findings
 - **Outcome:** Provide people with disabilities timely access to workplace accommodation solutions with standardized and simplified processes

2. The built environment

Goal

Our goal is to create buildings and spaces that are easy to use and welcoming for all those who use them.

Barriers related to the built environment identified during consultations:

- accessibility varies across sites, buildings, and shared spaces (like washrooms, kitchens, and hallways), and some design changes have introduced new barriers or safety concerns

How will we get there:

- **Action 6:** AAFC will develop and pilot a service standard for identifying and removing physical barriers in both leased and non-leased buildings in the National Capital Region
 - **Outcome:** Employees with disabilities in the National Capital Region will experience fewer physical barriers in the workplace due to faster and more consistent accessibility processes
- **Action 7:** AAFC will add accessibility considerations to existing departmental workplace inspection checklists
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will ensure accessibility is part of regular workplace safety inspections

3. Information and communication technologies



Goal

Our goal is to ensure that everyone can access the same information and receive the same services using information technology.

Barriers related to information and communication technologies identified during consultations:

- internal sites and documents are not always accessible. For example, some internal webpages may have content that creates barriers for users
- digital written content is not always in plain language or available in accessible formats

How will we get there:

- **Action 8:** AAFC will review the 25 most visited internal webpages and the 10 most used forms to check accessibility using WCAG standards
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will identify accessibility barriers in internal digital content
- **Action 9:** Based on the results in Action 8, AAFC will develop tools, resources, and procedures to support internal accessibility improvements
 - **Outcome:** AAFC tools and resources will improve accessibility and prevent future barriers
- **Action 10:** Content owners of the pages and forms identified in action 8, will be supported in making accessibility improvements and removing identified barriers
 - **Outcome:** Content owners will learn how to improve accessibility and apply it to their work

4. Communication, other than information and communication technologies

Goal

Our goal is to give people the choice to communicate and engage in the way that best meets their accessibility needs.



Barriers related to communication other than information and communication technologies identified during consultations:

- employees with disabilities cannot access information, specifically:
 - key messages and information are not always shared in ways that everyone can understand or use
 - event and meeting organizers often do not share contact information for participants with accommodation needs, and follow-up is inconsistent
 - there are few ways for employees with disabilities to give feedback on events, meetings, or communications, and people often do not know whom to contact

How will we get there:

- **Action 11:** AAFC will pilot and promote accessible meeting practices in targeted townhalls, major meetings and events
 - **Outcome:** Accessible meeting practices are always used and regularly promoted across AAFC
- **Action 12:** AAFC will develop tools and resources for accessible meeting practices in consultation with people with disabilities
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will have clear tools and resources to help staff plan and deliver accessible meetings

5. The procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Goal

Our goal is to implement procurement processes that are accessible and efficient, minimizing delays and ensuring that goods, services, and facilities meet accessibility needs.

Barriers related to the procurement of goods, services and facilities identified during consultations:



- accessibility considerations are applied inconsistently in procurement. Although training and guides exist, it is unclear if they are used effectively, and the process for ensuring purchases meet accessibility needs remains a barrier
- delays in providing required products or services, and misunderstandings of accommodation requirements, can prevent solutions from meeting individual's needs under the duty to accommodate

How will we get there:

- **Action 13:** AAFC will evaluate the effectiveness of the added accessibility considerations in procurement processes, from planning to decision making
 - **Outcome:** AAFC's added accessibility considerations in procurement are effective and help remove barriers in the procurement process
- **Action 14:** AAFC will review current procurement practices to identify barriers when purchasing accommodation solutions and pilot ways to improve efficiency including implementing our BAP focusing on supporting managers accessing the centralized accommodation fund
 - **Outcome:** Purchasing accommodation solutions is easy and quick, supported by the implementation of our BAP

6. The design and delivery of programs and services

Goal

Our goal is to design and deliver accessible programs and services through meaningful consultation.

Barriers related to the design and delivery of programs and services identified during consultations:

- employees with disabilities are not always consulted in the design and delivery of programs and services
- when consultations occur, they are not always meaningful, and diverse needs may be overlooked



How will we get there

- **Action 15:** Implement the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport and integrate into existing policy and procedures
 - **Outcome:** Supports an inclusive workplace by providing a consistent and employee-driven tool for documenting and communicating accommodation needs
- **Action 16:** AAFC will use its current leadership structures to increase visibility and help branches move forward on accessibility priorities
 - **Outcome:** Leaders across AAFC will be more accountable and aware, and will work together to advance accessibility priorities
- **Action 17:** AAFC will develop an accessibility policy and toolkit based on guiding principles of the social model of disability and the Accessible Canada Act
 - **Outcome:** AAFC has a clear accessibility policy grounded in the social model of disability
- **Action 18:** Apply a Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) Plus lens to ensure that consultation activities include a diverse range of people with disabilities and consider intersecting factors such as gender, culture, and geography
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will have clear guidance on how to meaningfully consult people with disabilities as part of our toolkit

7. Transportation

Goal

Our goal is to address barriers employees may face regarding their path of travel, such as the route someone takes to move from one place to another within a building, site, or space.

Barriers related to transportation identified during consultations:

- travel barriers that may exist in decision making, planning, and engagement are not being considered

How will we get there:



- **Action 19:** AAFC will update the site safety inspection protocol to include path of travel considerations
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will ensure accessibility is part of regular workplace safety inspections
- **Action 20:** AAFC will include path of travel considerations in the accessibility toolkit for decision making, planning and engagement
 - **Outcome:** AAFC will have a clear policy that promotes accessibility using the social model of disability
- **Action 21:** AAFC will create guidance on accessibility and duty to accommodate for employees on travel status
 - **Outcome:** Accessibility is a primary consideration for employees on travel status, reducing or removing barriers in advance



Looking ahead

As we put our accessibility plan in place, we will prepare regular progress reports as part of our obligations under the Accessible Canada Act and the Accessible Canada Regulations.

To do that, we will:

- consider the feedback that we receive through our feedback process
- consult people with disabilities to help us prepare our progress reports
- report on the progress we have made

Real progress takes time and ongoing effort. We are committed to building lasting change.

This plan is an important step in achieving our long-term goal of creating a Canada without barriers by 2040.

Resources

- [Glossary](#)
- [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [Accessible Canada Regulations](#)
- [Summary of the Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [Summary of the Accessible Canada Regulations](#)