Canadian Food
Inspection Agency
Agence canadienne
d'inspection des aliments

Accessibility Progress Report 2024 for Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Canada

On this page

Message from the CFIA President and the Executive Vice-President

We are pleased to present the CFIA's second annual Accessibility progress report for the year 2024. This report highlights the agency's continued commitment to creating a fully accessible, respectful, and inclusive workplace, with a focus on empowering employees with disabilities and advancing the goals of our accessibility plan.

Our efforts gained momentum with the launch of the [CFIA's accessibility plan](#), developed in response to the [*Accessible Canada Act*](#) and the [Clerk of the Privy Council's 2021 Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#). The accessibility plan is a key component of our broader Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for 2022 to 2025 and will continue to be a focus for the next iteration of that plan, demonstrating our dedication to fostering diversity, equity, and accessibility within the agency.

The CFIA's vision for accessibility is to establish and sustain a workplace that is fully accessible, respectful and inclusive, where persons with disabilities are valued and enabled to thrive. To achieve this vision, our accessibility plan focuses on 5 key goals:

1. improving recruitment, retention and promotion of disabled persons

2. making information and communications technology (ICT) accessible for everyone

3. enhancing the accessibility of the built environment and transportation

4. designing and delivering accessible programs and services (including procurement)

5. creating and maintaining a culture of accessibility (includes communications other than ICT)

As we look back on the progress made in 2024, we recognize that we are on a transformative path. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of our employees, stakeholders, and partners who have helped us achieve the milestones we celebrate today.

We remain committed to ongoing evaluation and improvement. Our progress will be assessed annually, and the plan will be reviewed and refined every 3 years. We will rely on our performance measurement framework and feedback from employees to track our success and identify areas for further growth.

The success of our accessibility plan depends on the active involvement of every member of the CFIA. We encourage all employees to deepen their understanding of accessibility, engage with persons with disabilities to better understand their experiences, and actively contribute to fostering an accessible culture. Together, we can realize our vision and support the Government of Canada's goal of becoming the most accessible and inclusive public service in the world.

Paul MacKinnon
President

J.-G. Forgeron
Executive Vice-President

General

Overview of the progress report

The CFIA's second annual Accessibility progress report offers a comprehensive assessment of our efforts in fostering accessibility and inclusivity within the CFIA. We have structured our report to align with the mandatory headings outlined in [section 5 of *Accessibility Canada Act* (Purpose of Act)](#) while providing a clear and detailed account of our progress.

The report addresses the following critical areas:

- employment

- the built environment

- information and communication technologies (ICT)

    - communication, other than ICT

- the design and delivery of programs and services

- the procurement of goods, services, and facilities

- transportation

In each of these areas, we describe our progress in removing or preventing barriers identified in our accessibility plan, provide insights into updated timelines and actions, acknowledge any new barriers that have come to our attention and discuss any long-term plans that continue to shape our accessibility journey.

In our progress reports, we also provide comprehensive information about:

- how we have engaged with persons with disabilities to gather their perspectives and experiences

- the methods we have employed to collect feedback and provide an account of the valuable insights we have received through this process

- how the feedback received from persons with disabilities has informed and influenced our actions and decision-making

The Executive Director of Workplace Health and Diversity will be responsible for oversight, monitoring, and reporting of the CFIA's accessibility plan and progress reports.

A note on usage

While advocates, including government, have advised using person-first language ("person/people with a disability"), many disability advocates now promote using identity-first language ("disabled person/people").

To reflect that diversity of views, we have used both versions in this document.

CFIA feedback process

The Executive Director, Workplace Health and Diversity will be responsible for receiving feedback on barriers and accessibility at the CFIA.

Feedback may be provided via online form, telephone, mail, and email.

We will acknowledge all accessibility feedback in the same manner in which it was received, except feedback that is sent anonymously.

By online form:

Accessibility feedback form

By telephone:

Phone lines are open from 8 am to 8 pm Eastern Time, Monday to Friday.

Toll-free: 1-855-670-0943

By mail:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency
c/o Accessibility Team
1400 Merivale Road, Tower 2
Floor 2, Room 128
Ottawa ON K1A 0Y9

By email:

cfia.accessibility-accessibilite.acia@inspection.gc.ca

This contact information will allow the CFIA employees and the public to do the following:

- request the CFIA's accessibility plan, as well as progress reports in 1 of the alternate formats described in the *Accessible Canada Regulations*: SOR/2021-241

- request the description of the CFIA's feedback process in 1 of the alternate formats described in the *Accessible Canada Regulations*: SOR/2021-241 provide feedback to the CFIA on barriers and accessibility

These contact options are designed to facilitate communication between the CFIA and its employees, as well as the public, with a focus on promoting accessibility and ensuring compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act*'s requirements. Your input and feedback are highly valued as we work together to create a more inclusive and accessible Canada.

Progress update

Goal 1: improve recruitment, retention, and promotion of disabled persons

Employment

To create a more inclusive employment environment, the CFIA has implemented several initiatives, as detailed throughout this report, aimed at enhancing employment opportunities and representation for people with disabilities. As part of Goal 1 of the agency's accessibility plan, the focus is on identifying and addressing barriers, eliminating obstacles, and ensuring accessible systems and processes for recruitment, retention, and promotion.

The CFIA's commitment to diversity and accessibility is evident in its participation in various targeted recruitment initiatives for persons with disabilities. These initiatives include:

- attending targeted career fairs at local universities and colleges across the country

- collaborating with organizations like LiveWorkPlay as part of the Federal Employment Strategy Group (FESG), which aims to help workplaces hire and welcome persons with disabilities

- promoting targeted inventories for persons with disabilities in the fields of Data and Policy, Digital Technology and Finance

- finalized a persons with disabilities student inventory, which was completed in early 2024 and

- finalized a national, external entry-level pool for the CR-04/CR-05/AS-01 classification groups and levels for persons with disabilities that garnered 395 applications

The agency continues to encourage the use of a talent pool established in collaboration with the Public Service Commission and other federal departments, specifically for individuals with disabilities in the scientific field. The Human Resources Branch (HRB) was actively involved in all stages of the process, including developing the merit criteria statement and poster, creating assessment materials, and providing support throughout each phase of the staffing process. To date, the agency has hired 2 employees from this pool, which remains available for hiring managers to utilize.

The CFIA continues to maintain and promote to hiring managers a list of employment equity talent sources, which are shared during the creation of staffing processes as alternatives to traditional staffing mechanisms. Human resources advisors regularly refer to this list when presenting staffing options to managers. Additionally, an information deck has been developed for managers and operational staffing advisors to highlight diversity and inclusion options at every stage of the hiring process.

Accessibility considerations have been incorporated into branch-level human resources planning strategies. These considerations are now a key component of the human resources planning process and will be included as considerations within future agency-wide strategies.

The CFIA has recently updated the HR planning survey, which provides branches with the opportunity to identify any equity or accessibility related challenges, areas for improvement and supports required during the process of identifying gaps within the Branch. Risks are identified and mitigation strategies are provided should there be a gap/risk identified within the HR planning process.

To facilitate understanding of the agency's current status, and support future decision making, Branch Senior Management, through the HR planning process, are provided with their workforce data, which includes targeted information for occupational groups, the degree of underrepresentation in the Branch, the turnover rates per year, and historical year over year growth or reduction rates.

To address gaps in representation and under-representation concerns, the CFIA has taken a comprehensive approach. A working group, composed of subject matter experts across human resources, was created and is actively working on identifying, consulting upon and implementing recommendations to rectify the under-representation concerns within the CFIA through proposals related to recruitment, retention and career development.

To address gaps in representation, HRB collects and analyzes employment equity and workforce availability data. This data is used to guide discussions with managers when determining which strategies they should employ to reduce gaps within their groups. HRB prepares and shares this information with staffing advisors, who in turn discuss the information with hiring managers. This information supports conversations about representation gaps at the area/branch. The thorough analysis allows for a clear understanding of where these gaps exist, enabling the development of targeted strategies for improvement. Additionally, the Vice-President (VP) of each branch has access to branch employment equity representation vs. workforce availability comparisons and gap analysis as part of the VP Dashboard offering in ExploreHR.

The CFIA has initiated a self-identification campaign. To date, a President's Message has been distributed to all staff reiterating the importance of self-identification, and in early 2024 a message to managers was sent to encourage discussions about self-identification with their teams. The CFIA is creating testimonials featuring volunteers from different employee groups who have opted to self-identify. The first testimonial, in the form of a video, is currently under review and incorporates branding elements, including self-identification logos and a carefully selected colour scheme, to ensure a consistent and cohesive campaign look and feel. The CFIA has a self-identification questionnaire response rate of 94.2% as of March 31, 2024.

The CFIA recognizes that creating a fully accessible employment process goes beyond closing representation gaps and hiring individuals with disabilities. To further support employees with disabilities, the CFIA has implemented measures to enhance retention and address barriers in this area. To this end, the CFIA has put in place a number of skilled resources which enable a case management approach to Duty to Accommodate (DTA) cases, creating a national network to provide crucial accommodation support and services. These dedicated professionals play an essential role in managing accommodation cases, raising awareness, and assisting managers in fulfilling their responsibilities. Additionally, the CFIA has held a series of awareness sessions to promote the national launch of these services, along with more in-depth sessions covering the DTA and associated roles and responsibilities.

The CFIA is currently developing a rollout strategy to enhance awareness and communication on accessibility and accommodations, which will launch in tandem with related updates to the CFIA's intranet content. The CFIA developed and launched intranet content on Merlin, the internal employee portal, as a one-stop shop for accessibility, accommodation, and well-being where both managers and employees can consult and gain important and relevant information.

Manager awareness sessions have already begun through the Supervisory/Managerial School Pilot initiative led by the Operations Branch, as well as through other forums such as management-level meetings and Occupational Health and Safety tables. In developing the various tools, subject-matter-experts were consulted and had the opportunity to provide comments and feedback. Employee information sessions were launched, which provided guidance on and reimbursement of accessibility funding through the Health Accommodation Office, raising awareness of resources available and working towards reducing barriers to accessing these resources for employees with disabilities.

The CFIA continues the use of the national Diverse Selection Board Members Inventory (DSBMI), which includes volunteers from equity-deserving groups who are committed to supporting managers in selection processes. The goal is to ensure fair, unbiased candidate assessments and to foster a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Participants in the inventory can assist managers with various stages of the hiring process, such as screening applications, evaluating written assessments, conducting interviews, and providing feedback to candidates. Feedback from HR staffing advisors and hiring managers has generally been positive, with many proactively seeking referrals.

The agency continues to encourage Branch Heads to factor in equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and accessibility considerations when nominating non-executive employees for leadership opportunities. EDI data is used to ensure that both executive and non-executive future leaders have equal access to leadership development and training programs. Additionally, the CFIA's current official languages policy allows managers to make non-imperative appointments for disability or other employment equity reasons to expedite staffing, while also committing to providing language training to meet position requirements.

Goal 2: make information and communications technology accessible for everyone

Information and communication technologies

The CFIA continues to make significant strides in making its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) accessible to all employees. To achieve this, the Digital Services Branch (DSB) established an Accessibility Working Group (AWG) to bring together subject matter experts from across the branch and Agency to share best practices and collaborate with other government departments to improve ICT accessibility at the CFIA. As part of this effort, DSB launched an ICT accessibility review to assess the current state of the CFIA's ICT, focusing on information and data access, technology software, and hardware. This review identified several key accessibility barriers, including:

- compatibility issues with assistive technologies

- lack of centralized support for accessibility and accommodations

- inconsistent and non-intuitive user interfaces

- inaccessible documentation and training

- poor communication and responsiveness regarding accessibility-related queries

The CFIA engaged with several internal and external stakeholders to identify these barriers including the Persons with Disabilities Network, Employee Accessibility Network, Health Accommodation Office, Duty to Accommodate Office, and IT Client Care Centre.

In addition, DSB joined several government-wide accessibility communities of practice (CoPs) to learn what other organizations are doing to improve ICT accessibility: the Interdepartmental Accessibility CoP, the Plain Language CoP, and the Disability Inclusion and Workplace Accommodation CoP, to learn from other organizations and exchange best practices. DSB also engaged with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to learn about their IT Accessibility Office and strategies. The CFIA plans to leverage ESDC's free accessibility training to educate the CFIA employees, including developers. DSB also collaborated with the Accessibility, Accommodation, and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) team at Shared Services Canada (SSC) to understand how to enhance ICT accessibility. This involved exploring how employees can access the AAACT program, available technologies, tools, training, and resources, including the Lending Library and targeted accessibility training for IT professionals.

To ensure new technologies are inclusive from the outset, DSB is integrating an accessibility checklist into the Digital Enablement Experimentation Lab process. Additionally, DSB is collaborating with the CFIA's Enterprise Project Management Office to incorporate accessibility

checkpoints into the Tier 1 - Gate 2a Checklist and High-level Business Requirements within the Enterprise Project Management Framework.

The CFIA has taken a number of steps to improve the accessibility of its ICT environment. DSB is working on creating an accessibility landing page in the IT Client Care Centre knowledgebase, which will link to all accessibility-related knowledge articles. DSB is also in the early stages of designing an IMIT accessibility SharePoint page to centralize accessibility resources for employees. Furthermore, DSB has developed a guide on creating accessible documents in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, which includes step-by-step instructions and checklists. This guide is currently moving through approvals and will be shared with staff shortly, alongside other accessibility resources on SharePoint.

The CFIA has developed an internal webpage titled "Web accessibility at the agency," which outlines the accessibility requirements for all communications products. This page details the responsibilities of employees creating content and provides links to resources that support the proactive creation of accessible communications and web content. It was developed as part of the CFIA's transition to a new web content management system, which includes built-in tools to help ensure compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). This system simplifies the process of maintaining accessibility standards for web content and features a content readability add-on that provides readability scores and feedback to content owners for ongoing improvement.

Additionally, the CFIA has implemented a process that requires Branch Heads to approve content and submit a mitigation plan for any web content that does not meet accessibility standards. To date, no requests for approval have been received, reflecting the CFIA's proactive approach to addressing accessibility issues.

To raise awareness and promote engagement, the DSB's Accessibility Lead has begun sending quarterly updates to DSB staff about key accessibility events and initiatives within the branch. DSB has also continued to feature an "Accessibility Spotlight" in its branch newsletter, educating employees on topics such as MS Teams accessibility features, using PowerPoint Live for accessible presentations, and applying Microsoft's heading structure for document accessibility.

In addition to these efforts, the CFIA has made specific accommodations to support employees with disabilities. Assistive technologies were installed at the CFIA laboratories to assist employees with hearing impairments, and its Health Accommodation Office has provided support in procuring personal assistive devices. The CFIA also provides extra-large monitors and colour filtration covers for employees with visual impairments or medical conditions that require restrictions on certain light waves.

The CFIA continues to work to enhance accessibility in meetings, by promoting the use of the guidance document titled "Etiquette in a hybrid-meeting environment," which highlights key accessibility considerations and features to ensure more inclusive meetings.

Finally, the CFIA continues to solicit feedback on its accessibility initiatives by adding an accessibility survey question to the WalkMe survey on the My CFIA service portal. This will help the agency identify areas for improvement and ensure ongoing progress toward an inclusive ICT environment for all staff.

Goal 3: enhance the accessibility of the built environment and transportation

Built environment

Dedicated to fostering an accessible and inclusive environment, the CFIA continues to make substantial progress in enhancing the accessibility of its built environment. Under Goal 3 of the agency's Accessibility Plan, the CFIA's efforts focus on identifying barriers and solutions, removing barriers, and maintaining accessible spaces.

The CFIA conducted an accessibility assessment of its common areas at the Charlottetown laboratory during 2022 to 2023, with a similar evaluation for the Calgary laboratory set to be completed in 2024 to 2025. To date, 16% of the CFIA's common spaces in custodial buildings have been assessed for accessibility. Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), as the CFIA's authorized service provider for its leased properties, is responsible for conducting accessibility audits to ensure compliance with the latest standards. These audits take place 2 to 3 years before a lease expires, allowing sufficient time to implement any necessary corrective actions.

The CFIA has several key accessibility improvements underway including:

- the installation of automatic doors at the National Centre for Foreign Animal Disease (NCFAD) that are security-controlled and activated by access cards worn by staff (no touch required)

- newly designed security barriers at NCFAD, which will feature access-controlled gates to accommodate individuals with disabilities

- workstation modifications such as the installation of sit-stand desks and the lowering of shelves to improve accessibility and

- road access improvements to the NCFAD Lethbridge laboratory, including the addition of concrete on a steep section of the road to improve traction

Building on its efforts to support science-based careers for the Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) community, the CFIA is nearing the completion of a project to create open-concept

workspaces in the Burnaby Laboratory that will meet the specific needs of D/HH employees and students. These workspaces will facilitate visual communication and the use of assistive technologies, making both office and laboratory environments more accessible and conducive to the work and safety of D/HH individuals. This project, which is expected to be completed by March 2025, aims to serve as a model that could be adapted for other CFIA laboratories and potentially for other labs within the Health portfolio.

In addition to these ongoing efforts, the CFIA is incorporating accessibility considerations into its new construction projects. The upcoming Sidney laboratory, set to be completed in 2025, has been designed to meet the universal accessibility requirements outlined by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). This ensures that all functional spaces in the facility comply with accessibility standards, including circulation areas, clearances, and other key features. Accessibility specialists from Laboratories Canada are actively involved in the design process to provide expert guidance and ensure a fully accessible built environment.

The CFIA's real property strategy has been finalized, and the agency will continue to assess its common areas for accessibility needs, prioritizing any deficiencies in its investment plan. This strategy involves a comprehensive evaluation of the agency's current real estate portfolio, asset conditions, operational procedures, governance frameworks, and suggestions for enhancements. Its ultimate goal is to align with wider government priorities, with a particular focus on accessibility, sustainability, and Indigenous reconciliation.

As part of its lease renewal and new lease processes, PSPC ensures that the CFIA buildings comply with updated accessibility standards. If non-compliance is identified, property owners are required to make the necessary adjustments to their facilities within a set timeframe.

The CFIA also collects feedback on accessibility through mechanisms such as the duty to accommodate process and accommodation requests. Recently, feedback was received from a client with a disability regarding the CFIA's leased facility in Mirabel, QC, noting that the sidewalk leading to the main entrance lacked an adequate turning radius for wheelchair users. PSPC has already begun implementing corrective measures to address this issue, with the project scheduled for completion before the end of the fiscal year.

To better align its accessibility practices with those of the broader public service, the CFIA has continued consultations with other science-based government departments, including Health Canada; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; and PSPC. These discussions focus on sharing best practices, exploring efforts to remove accessibility barriers in the built environment, and evaluating the feasibility of applying similar strategies at the CFIA.

Together, these initiatives underscore the CFIA's commitment to enhancing the accessibility of its built environment and fostering an inclusive, barrier-free space for everyone.

Transportation

There is no progress to report on transportation at this time.

Goal 4: design and deliver accessible programs and services (including procurement)

To make the CFIA's programs, services, and procurement processes accessible, the agency's [Goal 4 actions](#) focus on identifying barriers and solutions, removing barriers, and designing and delivering accessible programs, services, and procurement processes.

Design and delivery of programs and services

The CFIA has made significant improvements to the design and delivery of accessible programs and services.

The DSB established its AWG to bring together subject matter experts from across the branch and agency to share best practices and collaborate with other government departments to enhance the accessibility of the agency's services and programs.

As part of its efforts, DSB worked closely with the AAACT team to explore ways to make the CFIA services and programs more accessible. This included learning about:

- accessing the AAACT program

- the technologies, tools, training, and resources available through the program

- the creation of the AAACT lending library

- the general accessibility training offered to employees, as well as targeted training available for IT professionals

To further its knowledge base, DSB joined several government-wide accessibility communities of practice (CoPs) to learn from other government organizations and share best practices for improving accessibility. These communities include:

- the Interdepartmental Accessibility Community of Practice

- the Plain Language Community of Practice

- the Disability Inclusion and Workplace Accommodation Community of Practice

DSB also consulted with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to gain insight into their accessibility tools and strategies, including:

- the establishment of their IT Accessibility Office

- the development of their IT Accessibility Strategy

Internally, DSB initiated accessibility reviews of My CFIA services to evaluate the current accessibility status of the platform and identify areas for improvement.

In terms of supporting accessible document creation, DSB developed a guide for employees on creating accessible documents in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel. The guide includes step-by-step instructions and checklists to help ensure documents meet accessibility standards. It is currently under review and will be shared with employees once approved. Additionally, the guide will be added to the accessibility resources in the IT Client Care Centre knowledge base.

To increase awareness of accessibility initiatives, DSB's Accessibility Lead began sending quarterly updates to DSB staff, highlighting important accessibility events, training opportunities and ongoing accessibility efforts within the branch.

DSB also continued to feature an "Accessibility Spotlight" in its branch newsletter throughout 2024. This feature educated staff on topics such as:

- using accessibility features available in MS Teams

- using PowerPoint Live to create accessible presentations

- applying Microsoft's heading structure to improve document accessibility

DSB collaborated with teams across the CFIA's 3 business lines to create and implement Canada.ca service initiation pages for the agency's external website. These pages provide clear, accessible instructions for users applying for the CFIA services. Additionally, DSB updated the My CFIA account page, removing inaccessible images, simplifying the language, and improving the task orientation of the page to enhance accessibility.

To gather user feedback, DSB added an accessibility question to the WalkMe survey on the My CFIA service portal. This allows users to report any accessibility barriers they encountered while using the CFIA services. DSB also conducted quarterly meetings with stakeholders from across the CFIA branches to review feedback from the WalkMe survey. To track and address user issues, DSB created an issue tracker that assigns the appropriate teams to resolve identified accessibility concerns.

The CFIA is actively working to improve the accessibility of its service initiation (SI) pages. This effort involves streamlining content by eliminating outdated, redundant, and unnecessary information. The agency is using the VisibleThread tool to simplify language, ensuring that content is clear and easy to understand for all users. By reformatting information according to the Canada.ca design system's SI page template, the CFIA is enhancing consistency and usability. Additionally, the agency is improving breadcrumb navigation for service pages on its website to further enhance user experience. These changes are aimed at making service pages more accessible, client-focused and intuitive.

As part of its ongoing commitment to accessibility, DSB is integrating an accessibility checkpoint into its services intake questionnaire. This addition will encourage individuals and teams to consider accessibility from the outset when requesting a service or product.

The CFIA has taken a proactive approach to building partnerships and sharing knowledge. Through its participation in the Interdepartmental Accessibility Community of Practice, the agency is learning from other departments and agencies, identifying best practices and exploring strategies to eliminate barriers in program and service design and delivery. Committed to ongoing improvement, the CFIA aims to adopt successful strategies from other organizations to further enhance accessibility in its services.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The Accessible Procurement Action Plan Progress Report was drafted in October 2024, with some of the key actions summarized below. Through the reporting cycle, the CFIA initially outlined 3 key action areas to address and prevent barriers in the procurement process:

1. embed accessibility considerations in procurement from the start, including requirement identification

2. implement a process to monitor procurement activities and ensure contracts incorporate accessibility considerations

3. promote awareness and provide guidance, training and tools for CFIA business owners and procurement specialists regarding accessible procurement of goods, services and construction

A total of 9 activities were identified in the original action plan, 7 of which were completed in fiscal year 2023 to 2024. The remaining 2 activities were deferred to fiscal year 2024 to 2025. Upon reviewing and planning these activities, it became clear that they could be revised to better reflect the objectives of barrier #3, as outlined above. The updated activities and their status are detailed below.

The CFIA Procurement and contracting directive was initially set to include a section on accessible procurement. However, the updated approach now focuses on revising the Procurement Management Framework to incorporate this section instead. Additionally, accessible procurement information will be made available in the Procurement Knowledge Centre for all business owners.

This change was prompted by the fact that the CFIA Procurement and Contracting Directive is no longer maintained, while the Procurement Management Framework is regularly updated and required by TBS. As such, the framework is the more appropriate channel for sharing procurement information, including guidelines on accessible procurement. The update was completed in October 2024.

The accessible procurement content will be integrated into the mandatory Authority Delegation Training to increase awareness and ensure that business owners are well-informed. Afterward, an agency-wide information bulletin will be issued to highlight the updated training, including the new accessible procurement components.

The change was made because modifying the Authority Delegation Training allows the content to reach a larger audience. This training is mandatory for anyone with delegated authority before they can receive a Specimen Signature Record and is revalidated every 5 years, ensuring ongoing compliance with the latest policies, including accessible procurement. Following the update, CPPD will issue an information bulletin to emphasize the changes. This activity is currently underway and is expected to be completed by March 31, 2025.

To ensure compliance with the TBS directive on the management of procurement, the CFIA will require business owners to complete an accessibility certification for each procurement. This certification will be integrated into the ePro system, where the CFIA business owners will be required to consider accessibility during the requirement identification stage, prior to submitting any procurement request to the Contracting and Procurement Policy Division (CPPD). The Accessible Procurement Certification will be made a mandatory field in ePro, ensuring that business owners cannot proceed with the procurement process until it is completed. Additionally, a mechanism will be introduced within ePro to provide data analytics on the Accessible Procurement Certifications, allowing for better tracking and oversight.

To further support accessible procurement practices, guidance and additional resources will be provided directly within ePro. The CFIA will also update its Procurement 101 Training to include a section specifically on accessible procurement. This training, delivered by CPPD, will equip business owners with an understanding of how to incorporate accessibility into procurement. Furthermore, the Procurement Management Framework will be revised to include accessible procurement guidelines, and relevant information will be made available in the Procurement Knowledge Centre for all CFIA business owners. Accessible procurement content will also be added to the mandatory Authority Delegation Training to raise awareness and promote its integration across the agency. To ensure broad adoption, an agency-wide InfoBulletin will be issued, highlighting these updates, including the new accessible procurement elements, outlined below. Finally, CPPD procurement specialists will receive dedicated information sessions, training, and tools to further promote awareness of accessible procurement practices within their teams.

The CFIA has updated the CFIA Procurement and Contracting Directive to include a section on accessible procurement. The agency's plan is to review the full suite of internal process documents, including the CFIA Procurement and Contracting Directive in 2024 and 2025. The intention is to archive the current directive and replace it with new documentation that incorporates relevant information on accessible procurement. Additional tools and information are expected to become available for business owners through ongoing initiatives by the

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to assist the procurement community in applying accessibility requirements in procurement, which the CFIA will share as they become available.

The CFIA works closely with other government departments to advance the Government of Canada's social policy objectives, including accessible procurement. It participates in various forums, such as the Public Services and Procurement Canada Client Advisory Board, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Senior Designated Official Council Meeting (Procurement and Material Management), and workshops and roundtables organized by the Canadian Institute for Procurement and Materiel Management. These forums provide an opportunity for departments and agencies, including the CFIA, to share approaches, lessons learned, and best practices for eliminating accessibility barriers in federal procurement systems and processes. Through these discussions, the CFIA stays informed about the efforts of other federal organizations to remove barriers, as well as the latest tools and guidance documents being developed by PSPC. These activities will continue as accessible procurement practices evolve across the federal government.

Goal 5: create and maintain a culture of accessibility

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

"Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)" as identified in the act, differ from the CFIA's definition as commitments and activities related to these areas are reflected under our organization's "Culture" priority area.

The CFIA has made commendable progress in fostering a culture of accessibility, aligning with Goal 5 of its accessibility plan, which focuses on driving behavioural change, so that accessibility becomes part of the agency's culture.

In 2024, the CFIA began coding all new pages on Merlin (the CFIA intranet site) according to the latest accessibility standards. As a result, all communications posted to the internal site are now accessible to employees with a variety of disabilities. This shift also means that teams responsible for posting content are more mindful of accessibility than ever before.

The CFIA has recently migrated the content of Merlin to the Drupal Web Content Management System, and integrated the "a11y" plugin, a tool that helps web publishers identify potential accessibility issues so they can be promptly addressed. The "a11y" plugin is now an integral part of our publishing process, helping the CFIA detect issues more quickly and ensuring that fewer opportunities for improving accessibility are overlooked. This approach mirrors the strategy the CFIA has applied to the external website, where accessibility has been prioritized throughout the publishing process.

The CFIA has also been reviewing the accessibility of older pages as part of any requested web updates, with the goal of bringing them up to current accessibility standards. This ensures that the most recent pages are also the most accessible for all employees. In terms of internal and external products, the CFIA ensures the accessibility of its videos by providing captions and transcripts, aligning with the Government of Canada's accessibility directives. Graphic design and imagery are leveraged effectively to convey key messages and reflect Canada's diverse population, always accompanied by alternative text (or alt text) for enhanced accessibility.

The CFIA has continued to actively promote its equity, diversity, and inclusion networks, including the Employee Accessibility Network (EAN), with a focus on increasing membership. Communications are carried out through various channels, including regular updates via internal InfoBulletins, emails to employee networks and communications with the National Managers' Community. Each message encourages employees to join the EAN, contributing to a more inclusive workplace. To further boost membership, the CFIA is implementing anti-stigma initiatives, such as the testimonials being created for the Self-Identification campaign, to make the EAN more welcoming and inclusive. While tracking exact membership numbers is challenging—due to the difficulty in accounting for employees who have left the agency—the CFIA keeps a running tally of members on the distribution list, using these figures as rough estimates rather than precise data.

The CFIA is deeply committed to promoting an inclusive, diverse and accessible workplace, as demonstrated by its comprehensive training initiatives covering various aspects of accessibility. The agency actively encourages executives, managers, and staffing advisors to take advantage of training opportunities offered by the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS), with a particular focus on inclusive hiring practices. Accessibility training has been integrated into executive performance agreements, contributing to notable progress. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of executives completing mandatory training programs, such as "Preventing Harassment and Violence in the Workplace for Employees (WMT101)," "Preventing Harassment and Violence in the Workplace for Managers and Health and Safety Committees (WMT102)," and "Moving from Bias to Inclusion." The high completion rates, with over 90% completion for both WMT101 and WMT102, underscore the CFIA's dedication to fostering a respectful and inclusive work environment. Additionally, some training programs, including the CSPS course "Moving from Bias to Inclusion", have been made mandatory for all employees.

The CFIA continues to work towards fairness and equity in staffing processes, with the continued use of the Diverse Selection Board Members Inventory (DSBMI), which consists of CFIA employees who voluntarily serve as selection board members, supporting the agency's commitment to inclusivity. Launched in April 2023, the program was accompanied by a full range of tools and resources. The continued communications of this initiative reiterate its

importance among hiring managers and individuals with disabilities, with the goal of increasing participation and utilization of the program.

Feedback

The CFIA has a dedicated accessibility email account (cfia.accessibility-accessibilite.acia@inspection.gc.ca) for receiving feedback on barriers and accessibility at the CFIA. A summary of the feedback received since the posting of the CFIA's Accessibility plan is included below:

- feedback categories (section 5 of *Accessibility Canada Act* (Purpose of Act)):

    - employment: 1 submission

    - built environment: 1 submission

    - design and delivery of programs and services: 2 submissions

    - information and communication technologies: 1 submission

- no feedback was submitted for the areas of procurement of goods, services and facilities, transportation, and communication, other than ICT

- other feedback

    - 3 submissions unrelated to areas under section 5 of *Accessibility Canada Act*

All feedback has been reviewed and shared with the lead of the area that the feedback is addressing for action or review. The feedback has been considered as part of the continuous improvement of our accessibility efforts.

Consultations

In November 2024, the CFIA conducted consultations with the Employee Accessibility Network to gather feedback on the implementation of the action plan.

The consultation process included a virtual meeting and the opportunity for employees to submit anonymous feedback in writing.

The following questions were posed to participants:

- Have you experienced or are you aware of any additional barriers to accessibility that have not been addressed in the accessibility plan?

- From your viewpoint, are there any other significant achievements or milestones related to accessibility within the CFIA not mentioned in the report up to this point?

- Have there been any notable shifts in employee awareness, engagement, and cultural or organizational attitudes toward accessibility and inclusivity within the CFIA since the launch of the plan?

- What specific areas or aspects of accessibility do you believe require more attention, resources, or improvements, and what recommendations or suggestions do you have for further enhancing the effectiveness of the CFIA's accessibility plan and ensuring its success in the future?

- How can the CFIA better engage and involve various stakeholders, including employees, in the ongoing efforts to advance accessibility and inclusivity?

- Do you have any other comments related to accessibility within the CFIA?

Results of consultations

The feedback collected offered important insights into further accessibility barriers, areas requiring improvement and shifts in employee awareness and engagement since the launch of the CFIA's accessibility plan. A summary of the feedback on the CFIA's accessibility initiatives is provided below:

Invisible disabilities and duty to accommodate

- Recognize that the majority of disabilities are invisible and acknowledging how accommodations for these disabilities may differ from those for physical disabilities in the workplace and selection processes

- Managers and human resources require extensive proof from employees about disabilities to offer accommodations, leading to stress and feelings of invasiveness and burden for the employee

    - Employees with disabilities should not have to repeatedly justify their accommodation needs, especially when there are existing medical assessments and recommendations

    - The process should be sensitive, respectful, and minimize the emotional strain on applicants

- Ensure decision makers are aware of invisible disabilities and that employees who have these disabilities have meaningful input in decision making

- Employees could use more guidance on putting together the information needed for duty to accommodate, examples of limitations and restrictions to guide health professionals in properly writing the required letters would be beneficial

Training and policy framework

- Implement mandatory training for managers, ensuring they are equipped with knowledge on diversity, inclusion and how to effectively engage with employees with disabilities

- Consult experts on both physical disabilities and neurodivergence and apply the SGBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis Plus) framework to policies, particularly in recruitment and accommodation processes

- More training on how to effectively support employees requesting accommodations and the importance of personalized solutions, rather than relying on a "one size fits all" approach

- More quantitative data should be available to support the policies and plans that are being drafted to show the extent of involvement of stakeholders and effectiveness of efforts

Employee engagement and feedback mechanisms

- The feedback process could be updated, with clearer direction and more tangible actions to address ongoing issues

  - Alternate mechanisms for employees with disabilities, such as verbal discussions in a one-on-one setting, should be considered

- Conduct surveys to address employee concerns, particularly those who have self-identified as having disabilities, to better understand their needs and improve how inspectors interact with persons with disabilities

- There is a positive shift in conversations about challenges, with management creating space for open dialogue, leading to increased awareness and positive change

- Visible changes are occurring, and as more people engage in these discussions, workplace acceptance and inclusion are growing

- Engagement on topics at the agency level may be too broad and not offer opportunities for true engagement, consider offering more opportunities to learn at the division or team level

Process barriers

- The return to office process and the duty to accommodate process both include barriers and challenges for those with disabilities, particularly those who have invisible disabilities, placing unnecessary burden on those seeking accommodations

- The job interview process is difficult for neurodiverse individuals and there is a need to focus on supporting individuals for career progression

    - The agency should offer flexible assessment formats and accommodations such as additional time or alternative testing methods, to ensure employees with disabilities can fully participate and succeed in the selection process

- Maximize usage of existing pools and standardize support from HR Advisors to ensure referrals are completed fairly

    - Proactive consideration of pools for persons with disabilities should be done whenever applicable

- Identify opportunities to offer accommodations for language requirements, such as non-imperative staffing options, so employees with a disability can be supported in career growth

Inclusivity and long-term workforce support

- Ensure that programs are accessible both internally and externally, making sure they are inclusive of all employees, not just those in Ottawa

- Prioritize employee retention and progression, with an emphasis on various job classifications beyond entry-level roles and a clear strategy for career advancement

- Consider increasing the length of time pools can remain valid, to ensure efforts of employees are not repeated unnecessarily

- Employees should be recognized for their strengths and abilities, not just their challenges, as the need for accommodations will likely increase with rising chronic illnesses in the population

- The agency should focus on supporting the career advancement of employees with disabilities, ensuring that they are not overlooked or discouraged from applying for opportunities due to past negative experiences with the accommodation process or selection outcomes

The employee feedback highlights the importance of addressing invisible disabilities, improving training, and implementing more inclusive policies to create a supportive and accessible workplace at the CFIA.

Give feedback on this progress report

[Accessibility feedback form](#)

Accessibility progress reports developed by other institutions

[List of accessibility progress reports developed by other institutions](#)