

NRC Accessibility Progress Report 2023



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View

Edit

Delete

History

Revisions

Translate

Accessibility progress report 2023 for the National Research Council of Canada

December 2023

► [Table of contents](#)

General

Feedback is essential to developing our future accessibility plans, which will build upon the [NRC Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#). Comments, recommendations and ideas from our employees and members of the public are a valuable part of this feedback. We commit to documenting and reviewing all feedback and addressing concerns as quickly as possible. We will acknowledge receipt of feedback on accessibility unless it is submitted anonymously.

Examples of enquiries and feedback:

- Requesting a copy of the accessibility plan, progress reports or feedback process
- Requesting alternate formats such as large text or braille

- Information about a barrier
- Comments about implementation of the action plan
- Contact the Manager of Workplace Programs to provide feedback

To share feedback or submit an enquiry, complete the online [accessibility feedback form](#). You can identify yourself or submit feedback anonymously. You will receive acknowledgment of receipt in the same means by which your feedback was received unless it was submitted anonymously.

The main contact for the NRC's accessibility plan is the manager of Workplace Programs.

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Overview

This progress report outlines actions taken or underway to support the foundational areas of focus in the NRC Accessibility Plan 2023-2025 and the NRC's priority areas of focus from the *Accessible Canada Act*. This report presents work done up to and including December 2023, and provides a snapshot of our evolution toward completion of 41 actions designed to address 12 main accessibility barriers.

Foundational areas of focus:

- Organizational culture and change management

- Governance and oversight

Priority areas of focus from the Act:

- Employment
- Built environment
- Information and communications technology
- Communications (other than information and communications technology)
- Procurement of goods, services and facilities
- Design and delivery of programs and services
- Transportation

Foundational elements

Organizational culture and change management

The NRC strives for a workplace culture that supports and fosters accessibility. Our culture and shared responsibility will support and sustain this important work across all areas of the plan.

Barrier 1: Managers and employees lack awareness about accessibility including the goals of the Act.

Action 1.1

Develop education and awareness campaigns to highlight barriers faced by persons with disabilities. This includes providing updates on the plan progress and promoting avenues for support and feedback.

Planned completion date: September 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Routinely promoted the accessibility plan and feedback channel in our internal employee newsletter.
- Launched a self-identification campaign, which included raising awareness of disabilities.
- Highlighted avenues for support and feedback during new employee onboarding sessions.
- Further developed our communications plan to include ongoing education and awareness, which includes additional consultations with the NRC Employee Network for Persons with Disabilities.

Action 1.2

Develop training programs tailored to employees, supervisors and service providers to help them understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring accessibility and fostering a barrier-free workplace. Training will be delivered in accessible formats.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Revised completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Designed and provided accessibility training to numerous internal service providers that specialize in areas like information technology, communications and the purchase of goods, supplies and services.
- Provided training and resources about disability inclusion, accessible digital documents, inclusive meetings, inclusive language and recognizing bias.

Governance and oversight

A coordinated approach with regular monitoring and oversight is key to making steady and timely progress in advancing our objectives.

Barrier 2: Lack of a coordinated approach for advancing accessibility.

Action 2.1

Identify who is accountable for accessibility and establish clear roles and responsibilities for its implementation and decision making.

Planned completion date: June 2023

Revised completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Confirmed accountability for leadership of the accessibility plan implementation, including overall oversight and lead roles for actions within the plan.
- Work underway to further define a longer-term model for governance and decision making.

Action 2.2

Establish advisory bodies for consultation on specific topics to advance accessibility. Advisory bodies may be established for ongoing engagement or for consultation on specific topics as appropriate.

Planned completion date: June 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Launched a persons with disabilities employee network, which included developing terms of engagement to support the network, and establishing avenues for members to voluntarily participate in consultations on accessibility.
- Refreshed our committee on equity, diversity and inclusion, a consultative body that supports our commitment to building an equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible workforce.
- Established an inclusive innovation community of practice to bring together employees across the NRC working on projects and initiatives related to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Established the NRC Council Working Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to provide advice to support the NRC in making greater progress in meeting objectives related to attracting, hiring and retaining individuals in equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Launched numerous consultations using different communications channels and formats (in-person workshops, online surveys, phone, email and virtual meetings with accessibility features such as closed captions) for a significant building renovation project in order to integrate accessibility into design.

Action 2.3

Publish annual progress reports starting in December 2023 on the implementation of the plan.

Planned completion date: December 2025

Status: In progress

Update:

- Published the first annual progress report in December 2023.

Areas under the *Accessible Canada Act*

Employment

The NRC is committed to being an accessible employer and strengthening the hiring, support, participation and retention of persons with disabilities. The following actions will help eliminate representation gaps and create an inclusive and barrier-free work environment where employees with disabilities can thrive.

Barrier 3: Persons with disabilities are not recruited and represented at a level relative to the available workforce in Canada.

Action 3.1

Implement and monitor goals and actions to increase the representation and hiring of persons with disabilities established as part of the Workforce and Workplace Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021–2024. Report representation and hiring data on a quarterly basis to NRC executives.

Planned completion date: September 2022

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Established hiring and representation goals for persons with disabilities.
- Implemented oversight mechanisms, including quarterly reports shared with senior-level leadership and an annual progress report for the Senior Executive Committee.

- Determined that, at the end of September 2023, representation of persons with disabilities was 61.7% relative to the labour market availability. In other words, when compared to the share of persons with disabilities in the Canadian labour market, the NRC was 3.3 percentage points away from the goal of 65% by the end of the fiscal year.
- Completed internal consultations with various research centres and branches to increase the representation of equity-deserving groups in the NRC's workforce through inclusive hiring practices.
- Continued revising and expanding our inclusive hiring tools and training resources.
- Developed a plan to establish a diverse selection board inventory, which will include persons with disabilities and be implemented by the end of March 2024.

Action 3.2

Establish regular awareness campaigns on types of disabilities and their definitions within an employment equity context to encourage job applicants and employees to self-identify.

Planned completion date: March 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Launched an NRC-wide self-identification campaign, with a focus on persons with disabilities.
- Established regular and ongoing internal awareness campaigns about disabilities and accessibility.

Action 3.3

Develop an outreach strategy to recruit persons with disabilities. Establish one or more strategic partnerships with organizations that advance employment of persons with disabilities to increase NRC hires and to better support and retain them in our workforce.

Planned completion date: September 2023

Revised completion date: January 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Built partnerships with organizations that advance employment of persons with disabilities.
- Developed a pilot internship program for persons with disabilities that offers interns meaningful paid, short-term work experience (4 to 6 months).
- Identified and contracted with a partner to support the establishment of an internship program designed for persons with disabilities, and to provide coaching services to supervisors to support the intern's onboarding, development and overall employment experience.

Barrier 4: Employees are reporting that the current accommodation policy and process is lengthy and challenging to navigate.

Action 4.1

Review and update the accommodation policy and streamline our practices to better support employees.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Revised completion date: April 2024

Status: In progress

Update:

- Conducting consultations with persons with disabilities, internal service providers and supervisors to identify the current process, address barriers and to define the future state.

Action 4.2

Establish service standards for accommodation requests and monitor response times.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Revised completion date: April 2024

Status: In progress

Update:

- Completing work to define service standards in tandem with work to streamline and coordinate accommodation practices.

Action 4.3

Implement a standard practice to follow up with employees with disabilities who have submitted accommodation and adjustment requests to ensure they have the tools and equipment they need.

Planned completion date: June 2024

Status: Not started

Update:

- To begin work on this action in 2024.

Barrier 5: Lack of community, sense of belonging and sources of support for persons with disabilities.

Action 5.1

Create an NRC network for persons with disabilities and encourage ongoing participation.

Planned completion date: June 2023

Status: Completed

Update:

- Launched the NRC Employee Network for Persons with Disabilities in June 2023, which meets monthly and has established terms of reference and avenues for members to voluntarily participate in consultations on accessibility.

Action 5.2

Promote the NRC mentoring program (Mentoring@the NRC) to mentors and mentees who identify as persons with disabilities.

Planned completion date: June 2023

Status: Completed

Update:

- Promoted the mentoring program to members of the Employee Network for Persons with Disabilities and to all employees via our internal newsletter.

Action 5.3

Promote on a regular basis available support services and avenues to report a concern, including the NRC Ombud.

Planned completion date: April 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Promoted Ombud services in our internal newsletter and at employee onboarding sessions so employees are aware of the services available and the existence of a trusted, safe and impartial space to discuss and resolve work-related issues that affect well-being.
- Provided and continue to provide information on support services and avenues to report concerns.

Built environment

The NRC strives to ensure its built environment is welcoming and accessible for employees, partners and members of the public. Our built environment includes buildings and workspaces.

Barrier 6: Not all NRC buildings, parking facilities and designated drop-off zones are fully accessible.

Action 6.1

Complete the remaining 3 accessibility assessments for buildings.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Completed the remaining accessibility assessments.
- Identified areas requiring upgrades, including parking areas, main entrances, washrooms, elevators and lifting devices.
- Developing plans to address identified accessibility barriers.

Action 6.2

Establish the process to engage with persons with disabilities to address accessibility during the planning, implementation and post-implementation stages for new builds and retrofits to existing buildings.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Planned and developed an approach to engage with employees with disabilities for launching a large-scale accommodation project.
- Conducted an accessibility and inclusivity survey that led to over 200 responses identifying barriers and challenges in specific workplaces, which will be taken into consideration to help ensure the project design responds to the accessibility and inclusivity needs of the workforce.

Action 6.3

Utilize tools to help identify deficiencies with respect to accessibility issues in the management of real property assets (buildings).

Planned completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Identified accessibility deficiencies.
- Creating a strategy and plan to resolve accessibility issues.

Action 6.4

Engage with building owners for all NRC-leased facilities to develop strategies to address accessibility deficiencies.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Update:

- Working with building owners to identify strategies to address accessibility deficiencies.

Information and communication technologies

Accessible information and communication technologies help ensure barrier-free access to information, tools and digital resources for employees and clients. The long-term goal is to make digital platforms fully accessible for all.

Barrier 7: Systems, tools and communications channels on our networks are not fully accessible.

Action 7.1

Develop awareness and training requirements for IT professionals to gain better knowledge of accessibility.

Planned completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Organized accessibility training for web developers in several of the corporate applications teams.
- Integrated web accessibility efforts in monthly activity reports for senior management for visibility and awareness.
- Identified training courses and tutorials for IT professionals.

- Compiled and promoted training resources (training and course lists) for IT professionals.

Action 7.2

Commence regular, ongoing accessibility assessments of current websites and applications.

Planned completion date: March 2025

Status: In progress

Update:

- Conducted numerous web accessibility assessments for new applications and existing web forms and websites.

Action 7.3

Create an inventory of digital resources and prioritize and track their improvement.

Planned completion date: March 2024

Revised completion date: March 2025

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Established an initial inventory.
- Developing a process to engage with internal partners and gather additional digital resources from across the NRC.

Action 7.4

Develop accessibility requirement standards for procured IT solutions.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Revised completion date: March 2025

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Working with a variety of internal service providers to finalize the wording of the statement of work contract for the purchase of IT solutions.
- Working on developing and integrating accessibility requirement standards into all IT purchasing processes.

Barrier 8: The NRC does not have the necessary tools, processes and resources to support technology-related accommodation requests.

Action 8.1

Develop and publish a list of software and tools available to enhance accessibility.

Planned completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Published an internal list of software and tools.
- Creating an internal communications plan to increase awareness.

Action 8.2

Put a process in place to identify and prioritize software and hardware requests to help improve accessibility.

Planned completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Identified accessibility needs and objectives for software and hardware requests.
- Establishing standards and roles and responsibilities for service providers.

Communications, other than information and communication technologies

The NRC is committed to equipping and supporting NRC employees to acquire skills to apply accessibility standards and develop compliant communications products. All communications products in print and on digital platforms must be accessible and inclusive for all NRC employees and Canadians.

Barrier 9: Not all internal and external communications products (print and online) are consistently accessible.

Action 9.1

Identify existing online content that does not comply with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's standards on accessibility and guidelines on making communications products and activities accessible.

Planned completion date: March 2023

Revised completion date: April 2025

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Developed a content inventory list of external web pages.

- Reviewed the inventory and removed web pages that were no longer needed.
- Identified 2,348 web pages for revision and adjustment.

Action 9.2

Update existing non-compliant online content as per the new Information and Communications Technology standard.

Planned completion date: April 2025

Status: Not started

Update:

- Once the Government of Canada confirms the new Information and Communications Technology standard, the NRC will begin updating the estimated 5,000 web pages (2,500 for the NRC's internal website and 2,500 for the external website).

Action 9.3

Perform ongoing quality-assurance exercises on all communications products.

Planned completion date: December 2025

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Developed and shared a checklist on the requirements for print and online communications materials.
- Designed a system that ensures all new print and online content is assessed for accessibility compliance before publication.

Action 9.4

Provide training and support to communications professionals on how to create accessible documents and on the use of plain language.

Planned completion date: April 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Developed and presented 7 accessibility training sessions to internal communications professionals.
- Established regular online training on accessibility for employees working in communications.
- Held a plain language training session for Communications Branch employees.

Action 9.5

Raise awareness on accessibility and provide advice to employees, through internal channels (employee and supervisor newsletters), on preparing and publishing documentation.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Updated our internal web page about accessibility with new content and additional resources.
- Internally published several articles, guidelines and resources about accessibility.
- Provided guidance to employees as needed.

Action 9.6

Develop a schedule to regularly share resources, guidance and standard practices on how to develop accessible documents and materials. Promote the information monthly through our internal channels.

Planned completion date: January 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Identified opportunities (specific events and days) to raise awareness about accessibility.
- Communicated information and resources about how to develop accessible documents and materials via internal channels like our employee and supervisor newsletters and internal web page about accessibility.
- Guided employees on accessibility best practices, including plain language and document formats.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

The NRC strives to ensure accessibility is considered in all procurement processes. Procurement refers to the acquisition of goods and services through purchase orders and contracts. The procurement action plan includes both the process of procurement and the goods and services that are being procured.

Barrier 10: Lack of knowledge on accessibility and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the procurement process.

Action 10.1

Offer accessibility training to procurement officers to ensure it is considered in procurement based on Public Services and Procurement Canada guidelines.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Designed and added an accessibility module to our internal procurement training program for new and existing employees.
- Procurement employees participated in a training session about accessibility standards and resources provided by a Government of Canada procurement specialist.
- Employees leading accessibility in procurement completed training about accessibility, accommodation and adaptive computer technologies.

Action 10.2

Provide accessibility guidance to employees with procurement responsibilities based on Public Services and Procurement Canada guidelines.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Update:

- Developed a library of policies and guides to support procurement officers in providing guidance to employees with procurement responsibilities.

Action 10.3

Ensure that procurement officers identify accessibility requirements in the statement of work and evaluation criteria and carefully review requests that exclude them.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Updated and distributed a guide, form and evaluation criteria for accessibility requirements to procurement officers.
- Developed and shared a checklist to help internal teams identify required documents.

Action 10.4

Establish guidelines and expectations that consideration will be given to accessibility requirements when purchasing goods and services, particularly when renting facilities for off-site meetings or events.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Status: Completed

Update:

- Developed an accessibility and inclusion checklist for renting facilities and organizing off-site events.

Barrier 11: Procurement documentation is not consistently available in accessible formats.

Action 11.1

Review all internal and external procurement documents for compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- Developed a dashboard to track and monitor documents that require updates to be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements.
- Reviewed, evaluated and prioritized documents that require updates.

Action 11.2

Convert inaccessible documentation, beginning with external procurement documents.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: Not started

Update:

- To begin work on this action in 2024.

Design and delivery of programs and services

The NRC is committed to making every program and service it offers accessible. The initial focus of the design and delivery of programs and services will be on the National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program. The program provides advice, connections and funding to help Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises grow, increase their innovation capacity and take ideas to market.

Barrier 12: Accessibility is not fully integrated into the design and delivery of programs and services.

Action 12.1

Conduct a review of programs and services across the NRC to identify barriers in design and delivery. This review will result in recommended areas of focus going forward.

Planned completion date: March 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Collected and reviewed information on the actions the NRC took over the past 3 fiscal years, and planned actions for the future, to increase the accessibility of our organization's services (website assessments, consultations with persons with disabilities).
- Work is underway to offer the 2020 editions of the 4 National Model Codes and their related user guides (available in print and PDF formats) in a web-accessible HTML format.
- The Canadian Construction Materials Centre is converting all evaluation listings and reports of standardized and innovative construction products from an English PDF format to a bilingual web-accessible HTML format on the NRC's external website.
- Resolved all issues related to web accessibility of the Federal Science Libraries Network and the National Science Library reported from 2021 to 2022 and from 2023 to 2024.

Actions led by the National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program:

Action 12.2

Review and assess all of the documentation and communications products (website, materials) against accessibility standard.

Planned completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Consultants reviewed the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program's documentation and communications products and provided recommendations to increase accessibility.
- The National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program is creating an action plan to increase accessibility.

Action 12.3

Develop a pilot program to educate National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program employees on equity, diversity and inclusion, including accessibility considerations in all aspects of program policy and delivery.

Planned completion date: March 2023

Status: Completed

Updates:

- The National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program developed, launched and completed internal equity, diversity and inclusion pilot training programs (online, scenario-based micro-learning accessible from any device anywhere, and a speaker series) on topics such as disability inclusion and reducing bias in hiring.
- After completing the online learning program, 80% of participants indicated they were more likely to act if they noticed bias or discrimination.
- The National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program is developing an implementation plan to offer the online

training to all its employees, with training on communications and engagement skills offered to specific teams.

Action 12.4

Contribute financial support to up to 5 client companies in the advanced manufacturing sector to hire persons with disabilities, in particular people identifying as being on the autism spectrum.

Planned completion date: December 2023

Revised completion status: April 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Financial support provided for 6 firms to attend a seminar on neurodiversity in the workplace.
- Financial support provided for 3 firms to participate in one-on-one awareness and education sessions about neurodiversity, to take part in a needs assessment, to hire 1 neurodiverse candidate each and to help employee transition through onboarding support.

Action 12.5

The National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program will evaluate assistive technologies such as teletypewriter (TTY) technology, chatbots, live-agent chat services, real-time text and video relay services in its call centre.

Planned completion date: September 2023

Revised completion date: December 2024

Status: In progress

Updates:

- Reviewing call centre processes and scripts for opportunities to improve accessibility and offer more inclusive services.
- Beginning an accessibility evaluation and review of assistive technologies in 2024.

Transportation

The NRC reviewed all its policies, practices, programs and services, and determined there are no barriers in the area of transportation.

Consultations

The feedback we received and continue to receive from consultations strengthens and informs how we implement our accessibility plan. As we move forward with this process, we will continue to consult persons with disabilities and listen to, reflect on and incorporate their feedback. We recognize the vital contributions of everyone who took part in consultations and we encourage further feedback.

Office consolidation pilot project

- Consultations with persons with disabilities is a fundamental component of the office consolidation pilot project, which will involve a major renovation to a large NRC building. As part of the groundwork for this project, we conducted consultations with full-time employees in a variety of communications channels and formats: in-person workshops, online surveys and virtual meetings with accessibility features like closed captions, as well as by phone and email.
- The consultation process encouraged self-identification. A total of 15% of respondents indicated having a wide range of disabilities (mental, cognitive, sensory, hearing, mobility, visual, neurological, physical,

environmental sensitivities and several disorders and diseases) that affect their everyday lives.

- Some of the areas identified for improvement in the building included natural daylight in interior spaces, washroom facilities, wellness spaces, vertical transportation (elevators and lifts), emergency exit paths, interior signage and visual, audible and sensory environments. We also captured information on proposed solutions to barriers that had been identified.

National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program

The National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program conducted interviews with recently hired industrial technology advisors to gather input about the recruitment process, including job poster language, screening criteria and motivating factors for applying. In order to create a more diverse and representative workforce, the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program is integrating the feedback into an inclusive approach to job posters.

Additional consultations

Consultations with persons with disabilities are vital to creating an accessible workplace. We will focus on holding additional consultations as we move forward with implementing our plan.

- The NRC is planning consultations with employees, including persons with disabilities, as part of the employment systems review and in developing the next equity, diversity and inclusion strategy.
- The NRC Council Working Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is planning consultations with persons with disabilities.

Feedback

Implementation

The feedback we received highlighted accessibility barriers and the value of implementing the actions in our accessibility plan. Feedback included the need for inclusive technology (such as websites, software applications), improvements to the physical environment (such as doorknobs, ramps, elevators), accessible information and communications (documents) and inclusive employment processes related to recruitment.

Feedback also highlighted the importance of eliminating biases, microaggressions and other harmful attitudes, as well as the value of a leadership approach that encourages dialogue and learning.

We also received positive feedback from employees on their appreciation for the plan and the effort made to encourage inclusion and accessibility.

Integration

We examined and considered feedback and integrated solutions into our actions, with the aim of creating a more accessible workplace and inclusive workforce.

As a result of feedback on completing accessibility reviews, including consulting relevant employees before designing and undertaking renovations, we piloted an accessible and inclusive engagement process to gather feedback from employees, including persons with disabilities, who would be directly affected by the renovations.

We took feedback about biases, microaggressions and other harmful attitudes, as well as systemic exclusion into consideration when drafting our internal messages, organizing learning events and sharing resources.

Feedback on the need to cultivate a safer space shaped communications in our internal newsletters and via different networks. This feedback will inform the work we are doing to determine the training requirements for employees and supervisors.

We also resolved technology issues our accessibility feedback process brought to our attention. For example, we created HTML versions of web pages to facilitate the use of screen readers, improved the format and colour contrast of links in one of our essential internal databases and created accessible templates and forms. We also developed training sessions and documents about accessibility, page and text layout, images and colour contrast, hyperlinks, plain language and how to use resources to check accessibility.

Conclusion

The NRC is committed to the goal of the *Accessible Canada Act*, to create a Canada without barriers by January 2040, both in our workplace and for those accessing our programs and services. We continue to focus on developing a diverse, respectful and inclusive workplace where persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to grow and can bring different abilities to the table. Over the course of the first year, we have made progress and will continue to do so as we learn and grow.

Date modified:

2024-01-08