



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Accessibility Plan



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

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1 Message from the Deputy Ministers of IRCC

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) facilitates the arrival and integration of people to Canada. This contributes to our strength and allows people to share with us the benefits of this country. Over one billion people in the world live with some form of disability, which is about 15% of the world's population. IRCC has a responsibility to ensure that the experiences of people with disabilities who are arriving and integrating into this country are positive and free from accessibility barriers. We also have a responsibility to create a safe and respectful workplace for our employees.

IRCC's vision is to be a department where all people are respected and included. We want to be a department where people can expect accessible services that are free from barriers and discrimination. We will strive to be equitable by design and accessible by default. We want to contribute to the realization of a Canada without barriers by January 1, 2040.

In recent years, IRCC has made it a priority to shift our culture towards being more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We started by having frank conversations on how to build an equitable and inclusive department. We realize that being a person with a disability is only one part of a person's identity. As a department, we are thinking about how we can better recognize and support people's intersectional identities. IRCC is focused on advancing accessibility, inclusion, and diversity efforts in four key areas for clients and employees:

- Accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Addressing systemic racism
- Understanding the impact of different identities related to gender and diversity
- Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

IRCC's employees have demonstrated a strong willingness to improve our workplace culture in these areas. We are reviewing our systems, policies, programs, services, and practices to make them more equitable and inclusive. Employees have also created grassroots efforts that focus on sharing diverse perspectives. Dozens of working groups, committees, and networks have emerged. This includes a Persons with Disabilities Network with the support and engagement of senior management. These employee-driven initiatives are paving new paths at IRCC.

IRCC's senior leadership is also dedicated to becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We are highlighting inequities in our organizational culture and people management practices. We are also developing and integrating mechanisms for accountability. Senior leaders have led open discussions and town halls and have engaged on equity issues in meetings. We are changing our structures. We have added an Employee Support Office (ESO) to further support employees with accommodation requests. We are taking both a "top down" and "bottom up" approach to shifting our culture. We are making great strides towards being more accessible, inclusive, and diverse as a department.

The IRCC Accessibility Plan complies with the [Accessible Canada Act: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada](#). It shares the recent progress we have made towards becoming a better service provider and employer for persons with disabilities. The Plan highlights barriers that currently exist in our

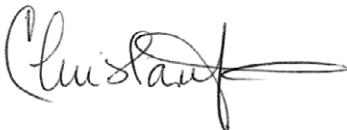


department. It lays out tangible actions that IRCC will take over the next three years to remove these barriers and prevent new barriers.

The Plan was created using a “nothing without us” approach. Persons with disabilities were a part of every aspect of creating the Plan. The Accessibility Steering Committee led the creation of the Plan. This Committee included persons with disabilities. We consulted with the Persons with Disabilities Network and employees with disabilities. We also consulted allies, managers, stakeholders, and others who had feedback related to accessibility at IRCC. We conducted an accessibility assessment within each of the seven priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*. This Plan reflects the feedback and ideas of the community and the results of the accessibility assessment.

While there have been many great strides made on accessibility at IRCC, we still have a long way to go to become a fully accessible department. We need to work towards our goals of being equitable by design and accessible by default. We can do this by continuously consulting with our employees and clients with disabilities and valuing their lived experiences. We can root out systemic barriers and educate ourselves about accessibility and disability. We can ensure that persons with disabilities are included and informed in every part of our accessibility journey.

IRCC is committed to delivering on the proposed actions laid out in this Plan. We want to make our department more representative and inclusive and to contribute to creating a country that is accessible for all. IRCC’s Accessibility Plan will help us realize our vision of being a diversified department that is equitable by design and accessible by default.



Christiane Fox

Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



Scott Harris

Associate Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

2 General

2.1 Background on IRCC

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) plays an important role in linking immigration services with citizenship registration. We promote unique ideals that are shared by all Canadians and help build a stronger Canada. IRCC is building a stronger Canada by facilitating the arrival of people into Canada and supporting their integration and contribution to the country.

IRCC recognizes that visitors, international students, and foreign workers play a vital role in Canada's economic recovery and global competitiveness. This is also true for permanent residents and immigrants. IRCC works to ensure that Canada remains a country of choice for temporary and permanent residents. We are working to provide fast and efficient immigration services, which are essential to facilitate immigration, travel and tourism.

2.2 Feedback and organization contact information

IRCC welcomes feedback on accessibility, especially from PWD. We have initiated the following feedback process for anything related to accessibility. The IRCC Accessibility Officer is responsible for receiving feedback related to barriers to accessibility at IRCC or the implementation of IRCC's Accessibility Plan. Feedback can be directed to:

Address: c/o IRCC Accessibility Officer
365 Laurier Ave West
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1
Canada

Telephone number: [1-833-411-6166](tel:1-833-411-6166) or [613-437-6949](tel:613-437-6949)

Email address: IRCC.Accessibility-Accessibilite.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

Online: [Accessibility feedback form](#)

Feedback can be submitted with or without personal information identified. Feedback will be taken into consideration and forwarded to relevant divisions when necessary.

If the feedback included contact information, any immediate action resulting from the feedback will be communicated to the person who submitted the feedback. All feedback related to accessibility will be captured in a central location for analysis and record keeping. Feedback will be used to help identify, prevent, and remove barriers in a timely manner.

Please note: To receive this plan or the feedback process description in an alternate accessible format that works better for you, please make a request using the same contact information listed above.



2.3 Definitions and key terminology

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to how services, technology, locations, devices, environments, and products are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities equal opportunities to take part in life activities. The term means that there has been conscious planning, design, and effort to make sure something is barrier-free to persons with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population by making everything more usable and practical for all people.

Accommodation

Accommodation refers to taking steps to remove disadvantages for people that result from barriers.

Barrier

According to the *Accessible Canada Act (2019)*:

Barrier means anything – including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice – that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Disability

According to the *Accessible Canada Act (2019)*, disability is:

A physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.

Anyone can identify as a person with a disability (PWD) if they experience one or more of these impairments or functional limitations that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders their full and equal participation in society.



2.4 Accessibility Plan process

Accessibility Plan process overview

IRCC conducted a thorough accessibility assessment of the Department. This supported the drafting of the IRCC Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Plan initiative adhered to the following timeline:

- Phase 1: Project planning (March 2022)
- Phase 2: Data and document review (April 2022)
- Phase 3: Consultations (May-June 2022)
- Phase 4: Analysis and Accessibility Assessment drafting (July-September 2022)
- Phase 5: Presentation of IRCC's Accessibility Assessment (October-November 2022)
- Phase 6: Accessibility Plan drafting (November 2022)

The Accessibility Plan process was overseen and guided by the Accessibility Steering Committee. This Steering Committee included over 20 individuals from across IRCC who had a variety of areas of expertise and lived experiences.



3 Consultations

It was very important to IRCC to involve and consult with persons with disabilities to create the IRCC Accessibility Plan. We used discussions, interviews, focus groups, and surveys to gather information. All consultations were held virtually and offered accommodations and adaptations as needed. Our goal was to capture diverse perspectives from across the department. We especially wanted to capture the perspectives of employees with disabilities.

IRCC held preliminary discussions with six participants. We had four management discussion groups with 28 total participants. Managers also shared their thoughts related to accessibility-related supports and services for managers and employees. We then put out a call for interviews with persons with disabilities. Twelve persons with disabilities responded to the request and participated in interviews. IRCC also consulted with the Persons with Disabilities Network throughout the process to get their input, feedback, and advice.

We leveraged surveys during the data and document review phase of the project. We reviewed and analyzed responses from the Public Service Employee Survey results for IRCC from 2019 onwards. This data was used to support the consultation findings.

IRCC's Accessibility Plan is a snapshot of the themes and ideas shared during consultations. The lived experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities are infused throughout the Plan.



4 Accessibility plan overview

4.1 IRCC accessibility vision

IRCC's vision for accessibility is to be a department where all people, including persons with disabilities, are respected and included. We will be a department where people can expect accessible services that are free from barriers and discrimination. We will strive to be equitable by design and accessible by default.

4.2 IRCC accessibility goals

For the next three years, IRCC has three overarching goals related to accessibility that crosscut the seven priority areas of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*:

Grow awareness of accessibility and disability

IRCC is committed to learn more about accessibility. We will continuously seek feedback and input from employees and clients with disabilities. We will create opportunities to challenge our ways of thinking and will remain curious and open to new perspectives.

Coordinate and streamline our accessibility efforts

Accessibility touches every aspect of our work at IRCC. We will create avenues to share information and ideas across our department. We will be a leader and a catalyst for coordination of accessibility efforts across the federal public service. This goal will help us make our services easier to use and more accessible for employees and clients with disabilities.

Build accountability

The IRCC Accessibility Plan outlines tangible actions for the Department over the next three years. We will also develop metrics to evaluate the success of our accessibility initiatives. This will help us understand where we have strengths and where we are falling short.

4.3 ACA principles

IRCC is committed to adhering to the principles outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- a. all persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;
all persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities;
- b. all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;
- c. all persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with



- support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;
- d. laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;
 - e. persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures; and
 - f. the development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

4.4 IRCC's current accessibility-related initiatives

In recent years, IRCC has increased its focus on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. IRCC's leadership has been a strong supporter of creating a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable departmental culture. Many of IRCC's initiatives have started with our employees. We take an intersectional approach to accessibility. This means that we believe that each person is made up of multiple identities.

Here are some examples of accessibility-related initiatives that have taken place at IRCC recently for clients and employees:

- We formed a Persons with Disabilities Network in 2014. This is one of many groups in IRCC's Allies Network where employees can learn about and discuss systemic discrimination and ableism.
- The Persons with Disabilities Network has gained more leverage in the Department. It is consulted on a regular basis for all inclusion and diversity initiatives.
- We began offering deliberate awareness-building activities related to accessibility. This includes town halls, panels, and workshops. We also hold an event each year on International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3).
- IRCC held an accessibility awareness campaign led by employees with disabilities. Employees shared information about accessibility and disability and included information on non-apparent/hidden disabilities.
- IRCC established an Employee Support Office (ESO). The ESO facilitates accommodation solutions for employees with disabilities. The ESO also works to streamline the process to obtain those solutions. It ensures that employees are accommodated with respect and in a timely manner. The ESO also serves as a "one stop shop" to provide information and guide staff to appropriate resources.
- IRCC created a web section on the intranet dedicated to accessibility. This section includes resources on how to provide accessible client services. It also provides information on how to host accessible meetings and how to create and check for accessible content.



- IRCC met with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to learn about the ESDC Accessible Client Service Playbook. We then developed our own IRCC Accessible Service Delivery Playbook. It provides information on how to deliver respectful, barrier-free services to IRCC clients with disabilities.
- We held an IRCC Accessibility Challenge to think creatively about how to improve the design of our programs and client services with disabilities.
- To inform this report, IRCC conducted a full accessibility assessment to identify strengths, opportunities and barriers related to accessibility for persons with disabilities.

4.5 Priority area structure

The remainder of the Accessibility Plan is divided into sections that correspond to the seven priority areas outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services, and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

We have also added two additional priority areas that are important to IRCC:

- Accommodation
- Culture

These additional priority areas underpin the seven priority areas outlined in the *ACA*.

Each section includes:

- An overview of IRCC's plans and goals within the priority area
- Current accessibility barriers within the priority area
- Planned actions to be taken to improve accessibility

IRCC intends to complete the planned actions within the next three years. Because we must continually adapt as our context changes, the planned actions should not be interpreted as strict commitments. We are developing an implementation plan that outlines short-, medium-, and long-term timelines for our planned actions. The implementation plan will also help us assess the success of these actions.



5 Priority areas

5.1 Employment

As of April 2021, employees with disabilities represented 4.3% of IRCC employees. This is far from being representative of the proportion of Canadians that identify as having a disability. We have already started taking steps to improve our workplace for employees with disabilities. We understand that we must take many more steps to create a fully accessible workplace at IRCC.

IRCC's goal is to become an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. To reach this goal, we must have the services and supports in place to create a healthy and barrier-free workplace for all employees. This will allow us to recruit and retain employees with disabilities in our workforce.

Employment barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in the employee lifecycle:

- Candidates applying to IRCC job posters are instructed that they can receive accommodations. This can include accommodations for interviews, written exams, and other steps of the assessment based on their needs. The process for offering these accommodations can sometimes be too slow. Candidates are also not aware of the types of accommodations they can request.
- It is not clear what managers should be doing to support employees with disabilities and accessibility within their units.
- In IRCC's policies, there is no mention of accommodations and expectation setting related to neurological and other needs. This can result in employees with disabilities being rated poorer on performance reviews. This can be outside of their control. Additionally, employees with disabilities mentioned feeling like they need to put in extra work to accommodate for their disability. This can result in longer work hours and increased stress.

Employment planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to employment.

Documented hiring process

IRCC will be prepared to offer the proper accommodations to candidates during the hiring process in a timely manner. To do this, IRCC will provide documentation to all candidates that clearly explains all stages of the hiring process. The ESO will support when needed. We will also create and provide candidates a list of the types of accommodations that may be requested. The list will also share the steps that need to be taken to receive those



accommodations. IRCC will collaborate with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure that all interview and assessment materials and lists are accessible and meet PSC standards. We will be more transparent about the hiring process and accommodations. This will allow candidates to better understand the hiring process.

Accessible hiring metrics

IRCC will add metrics into performance agreements of all management. This will reinforce positive actions related to accessibility. These metrics will include required check-ins with employees about their accessibility needs. It will also include ongoing training and development related to accessibility. Managers will ask employees for feedback on how to improve accessibility.

Directive on considering accessibility needs

Employees with disabilities should never feel the need to work extra to compensate for a disability. IRCC will create a directive stating that managers must consider the accessibility needs of employees when setting deadlines for tasks. This directive would encourage discussions about adjustments and accommodations between managers and their direct reports.

5.2 Built environment

Because IRCC is often a first point of contact for people entering and settling in Canada, it is crucial to Canada's image for us to be fully accessible. IRCC has multiple work locations inside and outside Canada. In Canada, we have an Operations Support Centre in Ottawa. We also have Case Processing Centres in Edmonton, Mississauga, Ottawa, and Sydney. IRCC has employees who work on site as well as others who have hybrid working models. Because IRCC employees operate in many different locations and work with many different partners and suppliers, ensuring the accessibility of all physical locations is complex. IRCC will continue to work with suppliers and partners in ensuring accessible workspaces are considered in these agreements.

IRCC's goal is to remove all built environment barriers at every IRCC physical location. To reach this goal, we must understand the needs of our clients. We must also assess the current state of accessibility at all our locations and set targets to remove built environment barriers.

Built environment barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in the built environment:

- IRCC is making great efforts to ensure that all building codes are followed. We want accessibility to be considered at the design phase in the built environment. Right now, there is not a formalized process for receiving and incorporating feedback from persons with disabilities.



- IRCC teams responsible for the accessibility of the built environment take accessibility seriously. We need to stay up to date about the latest requirements and capabilities for accessibility in the built environment. IRCC will review the current state of accessibility within our physical locations to make sure it is current.
- IRCC is not the owner of all the buildings we operate in. Not all aspects of accessibility in the built environment are under the control of IRCC.

Built environment planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to the built environment.

Proactive built environment feedback

IRCC will work with the Persons with Disabilities Network to consult with persons with disabilities about the built environment. We will establish a formalized process for asking for and receiving feedback from persons with disabilities. We will also collaborate with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC). This will help us understand the perspectives of persons with disabilities and improve our practices.

Detailed built environment assessment

IRCC will continue to perform accessibility reviews of our physical spaces. We will review our headquarters in Ottawa and offices nationally. In the longer term, IRCC will work with our Global Affairs Canada (GAC) partners to encourage accessibility at all international IRCC locations.

Building owner discussions

IRCC will meet with building owners each year to highlight accessibility needs. We will discuss areas such as building entrances, washrooms in central building locations, and elevator access. We will collaborate with building owners to ensure that accessibility needs in the built environment are met.

5.3 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Information and communication technologies is an important aspect of accessibility. It has become increasingly important in the last few years as we have spent more time interacting with each other virtually. Technology underpins the work we do and can help us do our jobs. But it can also be frustrating and challenging if we do not have the systems, tools, or supports we need related to ICT.

IRCC's goal is to create the conditions at IRCC for employees and clients with disabilities to have enjoyable ICT experiences. To reach this goal, we need to be fully aware of the barriers that currently exist for persons with disabilities at IRCC. Then we can commit to removing these barriers. We can also communicate with our employees and clients to make sure they understand what tools and supports are available.



ICT barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in ICT:

- The systems and software purchased by IRCC in the past have not always been accessible. This has caused IRCC employees with disabilities to have gaps or delays in accessing systems and software.
- Not all IRCC employees are familiar with tools and supports available regarding ICT and accessibility. This leads to requests for tools and supports that are already available.
- According to some IRCC employees, the current processes for making technology requests related to accessibility can be confusing. Some also commented that the process for completing accessibility-related ICT requests takes a long time.
- Reports from those consulted revealed that some computer settings are locked and cannot be adjusted by IRCC employees. Some employees are unable to adjust these settings to meet their accessibility needs.

ICT planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to ICT.

Improving access to current systems and software

IRCC will improve access for clients and employees with disabilities to systems and software by:

- Conducting a formal ICT assessment. This will highlight the gaps in accessibility of the systems and software currently used at IRCC. Recommendations will be provided around specific technologies, practices, and processes that hinder accessibility.
- Creating a plan for addressing current barriers and gaps in IRCC's systems and software.

Improving communication about ICT tools and supports

IRCC will improve awareness and communication about accessible ICT tools and supports by:

- Developing a list of tools and supports available regarding accessible ICT. This will include providing training on these tools and supports when needed.
- Developing or acquiring training on how to use built-in accessibility features and functions in Microsoft products.
- Creating a communications plan to ensure that everyone at IRCC is aware of tools and supports regarding ICT and accessibility. This will be done in consultation with the appropriate networks and stakeholders.



- Making sure that accessible tools and supports are shared during new employee onboarding.
- Working with the Employee Support Office (ESO) to share information about tools and supports with employees with disabilities.
- Communicating with employees on a regular basis about the request process for accessible ICT.

Accessible ICT request process

IRCC will streamline the request process for accessible ICT by:

- Creating protocols to provide personalized ICT support. This will help persons with disabilities who are navigating barriers.
- Collaborating with the Employee Support Office (ESO) to support accommodations requests related to ICT.
- Setting service standards related to accessibility-related ICT requests to ensure prompt responses.
- Putting in place protocols for “work arounds” for employees with disabilities. This will help employees navigate inaccessible systems and software until issues can be solved.
- Holding accessible technology licenses in inventory for use across all networks.

Flexible customization

IRCC will allow employees greater flexibility to customize computer settings. This will only be allowed if it does not impact the integrity of IRCC cybersecurity.

5.4 Communications other than information and communication technologies

As a common first point of contact for people entering and settling in Canada, IRCC has a duty to communicate in ways that are inclusive and accessible. IRCC’s goal for communications is to be accessible by default. To reach this goal, we must shift our collective mindset so that every IRCC employee consistently considers the accessibility of their communications. We need to make sure that all IRCC employees are aware of better practices in accessible communications. We also must provide timely support to make our communications accessible.

Communication other than ICT barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in communications other than ICT:

- IRCC is aware of the importance of clear communication that is available in multiple formats. Many IRCC communications have already been vetted for accessibility. Some IRCC employees have not been trained on accessible communications.



- Employees provided feedback that communications are not consistently fully accessible.
- Some employees shared that there a lack of capacity, resources and tools to ensure the accessibility of communications at IRCC. These gaps create longer wait times for support with document remediation.

Communication other than ICT planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to communications other than ICT.

Communication training plan

IRCC will develop a training plan. This plan will include sharing best practices in creating and distributing accessible communications. We will offer training, resources, lunch and learns, and other opportunities to learn about accessible communications.

Regularly assessing content

IRCC will conduct a review of communications to ensure that they are all fully accessible. This will include reviewing accessibility standards for communications methods such as emails, PDFs, documents, and the Web.

We will work with the Persons with Disabilities Network to help identify problem areas and barriers. We will also work to apply standards that exist for external facing documents. We respond to employee and client comments on accessibility. We want employees and clients feel heard in their requests for accessible content.

Accessibility remediation resourcing

As we focus on ensuring accessibility, the wait times for accessible communications will only grow if we are not prepared. IRCC will analyze the current effort for making all communications accessible. We will then develop a plan for properly resourcing accessibility remediation. We will also communicate with all staff to be clear on the process and procedures to request accessibility remediation.

5.5 Procurement of goods, services and facilities

IRCC's goal is to fully consider accessibility in every aspect of procurement. To reach this goal, we must have clear policies and procedures that everyone follows concerning accessibility in the procurement process. We must prioritize the goods and services employees with disabilities need to do their jobs. It is also important for IRCC to consistently ask for feedback and input from persons with disabilities.



Procurement of goods, services and facilities barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in the procurement of goods, services and facilities:

- Some employees shared concerns that accessibility is not considered and documented on all procurements.
- The procurement of inaccessible ICT systems and software has been highlighted as a key barrier to accessibility. Employees within IRCC rely on a variety of software to effectively do their jobs. Procuring inaccessible systems and software creates barriers to success for persons with disabilities.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to the procurement of goods, services and facilities.

Documentation of accessibility checks

IRCC will ensure that documentation is on file confirming that accessibility has been considered for all applicable procurements.

Involving PWD in the procurement process

IRCC will create mechanisms for feedback and input from persons with disabilities within the procurement process. This includes reviewing and providing feedback on the internal checklist for procurement. We will make a stronger connection between procurement and the Persons with Disabilities Network.

Accessible procurement training

IRCC will develop training for employees about the importance of accessibility in procurement. This training will also include instructions on how to ensure accessibility is being fully considered.

Accessible ICT procurement plan

IRCC will develop a procurement plan for ICT systems and software. When acquiring new systems and software, we will:

- Prioritize accessibility
- Assesses accessible tools that exist on the market
- Build relationships with suppliers to ensure that all procured software is accessible
- Work with the Persons with Disabilities Network at IRCC to receive input



5.6 Design and delivery of programs and services

IRCC delivers services to clients all over the world. Providing programs and services to our clients is a core area of our operations. We have a responsibility to make our programs and services accessible to those we serve.

At IRCC, 1 out of every 5 of our clients has a disability. That is why it is critically important for IRCC to identify ways to be more inclusive for newcomers and visitors.

We are committed to having all our programs and services fully accessible by design. To reach this goal, we recognize the importance of understanding our programs and services through the lens of persons with disabilities. We must also take into consideration the particular challenges persons with disabilities encounter in the design and delivery of our services.

Design and delivery of programs and services barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in the design and delivery of programs and services:

- When programs and services are created at IRCC, accessibility can be an afterthought. Building in accessibility from the start is key to ensuring that programs and services can be used by everyone.
- It is not clear who is accountable for ensuring that programs and services are fully accessible. We need to identify who in our department has responsibilities to ensure accessibility by design.
- The current governance model for the design and delivery of programs and services does not adequately incentivize taking accessibility seriously. We require a mechanism to hold ourselves accountable.

Design and delivery of programs and services planned actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to the design and delivery of programs and services.

Training and development

IRCC is committed to equipping its employees with the necessary training and tools to enable them to design and deliver accessible programs and services. Employees need to be aware of accessibility and use appropriate tools. We need to give employees the means to provide services to clients with disabilities. IRCC will:

- Identify and develop educational materials that promote awareness and understanding of accessibility issues in service design and delivery



- Promote opportunities for all employees to receive training on accessibility issues
- Develop accessibility training for developers, quality assurance testers, and support resources. This will embed accessibility in the creation and modification of programs and services

Feedback on programs and services

IRCC will ensure that users are able to provide feedback regularly on the accessibility of all IRCC's external and internal programs and services. IRCC will improve on its existing feedback mechanism so that persons with disabilities are able to provide feedback in a manner most accessible for them.

Research, testing, and input

IRCC is committed to design and deliver programs and services that are fully and easily accessible to persons with disabilities by design. This means ensuring that accessibility considerations are embedded within the process of program and service design by default. This will ensure that programs and services are accessible to people of all abilities no matter how they access the program or service.

IRCC will:

- Use systematic data collection and analytics to identify barriers to accessibility
- Consult with individuals with lived experiences of disability
- Aim to deliver full functionality to all our clientele, and test and implement accessibility solutions to meet this ambition

Holding ourselves accountable

We will establish benchmarks to hold ourselves accountable and track our progress in delivering accessible programs and services. We will:

- Learn about best practices for governance models to ensure accessibility by design
- Establish an accountability framework that offers definitions and guidance to operationalize the Accessible Canada Act and ensure a common standard across IRCC programs and services
- Define performance indicators with targeted results and targeted dates to achieve those results
- Identify roles and responsibilities to empower the department with clear decision-making in this domain



5.7 Transportation

IRCC has carefully reviewed all of its policies, practices, programs and services, and has not identified any barriers under the area of transportation, at this time.

5.8 Accommodation

IRCC believes that accommodation for persons with disabilities is important. We acknowledge that people work, live, and experience the world in different ways. Providing accommodations allows persons with disabilities to utilize their skills, abilities, and experiences.

IRCC's goal is to provide timely and appropriate accommodations for persons with disabilities. We want to remove barriers and ensure equality. To reach this goal, we must have clear policies and procedures regarding accommodation. Persons with disabilities need to understand the accommodations process. They also need access to resources to help them navigate the process. IRCC must respond to requests for accommodation in a timely manner so that employees have the tools they need to do their jobs well. Accommodation involves ongoing conversations. We must prepare our managers and employees to have open discussions about accommodation.

Accommodation barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility in accommodation:

- It can take a long time to receive accommodations. New employees sometimes start their jobs without the proper accommodations in place. This leads employees to have a slower onboarding process. It also sets negative expectations for how they expect to be accommodated in the future.
- Some new IRCC employees were onboarded remotely. They shared that receiving proper accommodations was a challenge.
- Employees with disabilities shared that IRCC employees experience challenges with accommodations requests. Employees commented on the request process and the time required to fulfill accommodations requests. They stated that there are sometimes low levels of satisfaction with accommodations implemented. With the move to a hybrid working model, there is an increased need for accommodation in both the office and home locations. This places a larger burden on teams within IRCC who are responsible for ensuring accommodation requests are met.

Accommodation actions

In the next three years, IRCC plans to take the following actions to address barriers to accessibility related to accommodation.

Understanding the needs of new hires

IRCC will work with new hires well before their start date to understand their accessibility needs.



This will ensure that the proper accommodations can be sourced and ready for them upon their arrival. This includes having a firm understanding of the Accessibility Passport for employees joining from other departments.

We will create a checklist that hiring managers can use when talking to new hires to better understand their accommodation needs. Checklist questions will be created in consultation with the Persons with Disabilities Network. We will also add accommodation discussions to ongoing formal check-in expectations for managers and direct reports.

Formalized follow-up process

IRCC will implement a formalized process to follow-up with employees after remote onboarding. This will ensure that employees know about accommodation resources. It will confirm that needs are being met.

Additional accommodation support

IRCC will continue to build the Employee Support Office (ESO). The primary mandate of the Office is to support employees through workplace issues related to accommodations. ESO will work with other offices to coordinate accommodation support with an aim of removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Knowledge sharing

Through the ESO, IRCC will develop the organization's knowledge base related to workplace accommodation. We will maintain and establish partnerships with other organizations. We will be a leader in sharing best practices, tools, and lessons learned.

Regularly consulting about accommodations

IRCC will regularly consult with relevant stakeholders about workplace accommodation. This will include the Persons with Disability Network, unions, Human Resource partners, and other stakeholders. We will use satisfaction surveys to collect feedback about workplace accommodations service delivery.

Cross-departmental collaboration on accommodation

IRCC will collaborate with internal stakeholders to improve the experience of employees requesting workplace accommodations. This will include Senior Leadership, IT, Facilities, Procurement, and others.



5.9 Culture

To be successful in each of the priority areas of the Accessible Canada Act, IRCC needs to establish a deep-rooted culture of accessibility and inclusivity for persons with disabilities. At IRCC, we are intentionally working to dismantle stereotypes and biases around disability. Many of the actions we have taken in recent years were aimed at drawing attention to pre-conceived notions of disability and creating new perceptions and reactions. We will continue the work of building a culture of accessibility and inclusion at IRCC going forward.

Culture barriers

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility related to culture:

- IRCC currently does not have a centralized approach to handle accessibility issues raised by employees. This leads to discrepancies in how employee requests are addressed.
- Employees with disabilities may be consulted on an ad hoc basis through the Persons with Disabilities Network. But some feel that these employees are not recognized enough for the time and effort it takes to help with these consultations.
- Some employees feel that accessibility is viewed as an afterthought and is not proactively built into IRCC's decision making as an organization.

The IRCC Accessibility Assessment uncovered the following barriers to accessibility related to culture that we plan on addressing within the next three years.

Centralized approach to supporting accessibility

IRCC will develop a more centralized approach to supporting accessibility. We will establish a key contact or contacts, website, directory, email address, and phone number for accessibility. We will expand the accessibility intranet site to include information. This will include information about accessibility supports, services, tools, training, and other resources.

Evaluation of the accessibility consultation process

The input from people with lived experience is critically important to making effective changes at IRCC. IRCC will conduct a thorough evaluation of the amount of effort required to obtain proper input from persons with disabilities within and outside the department. Having a better understanding of the level of effort required will allow IRCC to make informed decisions about how best to plan for this work.

Recognition for employment equity committee work

IRCC will recognize time spent on employment equity committee work. This might include awards for accomplishing committee goals. There could also be committee member

appreciation events and recognition from senior leadership. We could also highlight committee work in communications.

Decisions accessible by default

We will accessibility to be built into IRCC's operations. This will help change perceptions of disability within the Department. It will also help us change perceptions in Canada. IRCC will implement a departmental-wide policy or directive. This policy or directive will mandate that we consider accessibility during all decision-making processes.



6 Reporting and implementation

The creation of the IRCC Accessibility Plan is the first step towards realizing IRCC's vision. We want to be equitable by design and accessible by default. We must now follow through on our proposed actions. As mandated by the *Accessible Canada Act*, IRCC will publish annual progress reports that describe our progress. We will also publish an updated accessibility plan by December 31, 2025. IRCC will continue to consult with persons with disabilities. We will identify areas of improvement and assess additional barriers to accessibility. We will establish metrics and data collection mechanisms to monitor our progress. IRCC is committed to becoming a more equitable and accessible department.

