



Polar Knowledge Canada
**Progress Report 2023-2024 on the Accessibility
Plan 2022-2023**

March 2024

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President & CEO of Polar Knowledge Canada

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Preamble

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) requires that all federal government entities prepare and publish an annual progress reports relating to their accessibility plans.

Polar Knowledge Canada publish its Accessibility Plan 2022-23 on January 30, 2023.

General

For all inquiries or feedback on Polar Knowledge Canada’s Accessibility Plan, please contact Robert Krug, Manager, Human Resources at HR_RH@polar-polaire.gc.ca or 343-548-4639. Inquiries or feedback may also be sent by mail to Polar Knowledge Canada’s Headquarters in Cambridge Bay, at Canadian High Arctic Research Station, 1 Uvajuq Road, P.O. Box 2150, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, X0B 0C0.

Areas described under section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

Employment

- Progress: No new barriers to employment have been identified since the publishing of our Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will engage on the development of an Employment Equity program by the end of fiscal year 2023-2024.
 - Included in this program will be to leverage other similar organizations to create a network of employees with disabilities that meets regularly to discuss disability-related issues and champions the inclusion of people with disability.
 - This program will include the regular promotion of training and events aimed at improving accessibility, disability awareness, inclusion and disability confidence of our employees.
- Progress: In November 2023, Polar Knowledge Canada released its first Employment Equity Annual Report. Polar Knowledge Canada is currently working on the development of its Employment Equity plan with an anticipated completion by March 31, 2025.
- ❑ Since the *Accessible Canada Act* has broadened the definition of “disability” and also recognizing that disabilities can arise at any point in life, Polar Knowledge Canada will launch an internal email campaign as part of its Employment Equity plan, explaining the expanded definition of ‘disability’ as well as the importance of ‘Self-Identification’, and will encourage employees to revisit their self-identification status if they so decide, which may increase our current representation rates.
 - Progress: This has been completed; in November 2023, employees were asked to update their Employment Equity information as part of the departmental onboarding to a new Human Resources Management System.

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to work towards meeting and surpassing the current Workforce Availability target for persons with disabilities (9%) by actively promoting the hiring of students and employees through the use of various government run employment programs aimed at persons with disabilities.
 - Progress: Since the November 2023 publishing of the Employment Equity Annual Report, Polar Knowledge Canada has improved its representation for persons with disabilities by 1% since the previous fiscal year. Polar Knowledge Canada’s human resource professionals have also taken the Federal Public Service Inclusive Appointment Lens training course to improve recruitment of Persons with Disabilities and is using the resources from the Public Service Commission such as the Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit and the Hiring Persons with Disabilities: Managers Toolkit and continues to promote the recruitment of students and employees with disabilities to hiring managers.

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada’s Human Resource and Occupational Health and Safety teams will work together to improve its tracking on accommodations to include:
 - a. Number of requests.
 - b. Rejected/Refused requests (i.e. not approved)
 - c. Accommodation type (e.g., IT hardware/software, workspace, environment related, personal support services, non-physical such as reduced work hours or change in duties)
 - d. Cost
 - e. Days from request to full implementation of accommodation
 - Progress: Polar Knowledge Canada consulted with the Health and Safety Officer at the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General to determine best practices and various tools for this process.

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to conduct proactive consultations with employees on a regular basis seeking further feedback on the accessibility of our employment for people with disabilities (e.g., surveys, townhalls, working groups, etc.).
 - Progress: Consultations are currently being planned as part of the development of the Employment Equity Plan.

Built Environment

- Progress: No new barriers to the built environment have been identified since the publishing of our Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will ensure every employee is provided a laptop, and a phone with internet access. Additional accommodation requests (magnifying screen, ergonomic mouse) will also be tracked. In inclement weather, employees can tether the internet from their phone to

their laptop at home. This removes the need for physical access to the Canadian High Arctic Research Station when it is difficult to commute.

- Progress: Polar Knowledge Canada is reviewing the process for tracking accommodation requests.
- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will ensure there are signs posted in all offices regarding the use of scents being prohibited. There will also be 'quiet rooms' available for staff to use in the event of a need to focus or work in solitude.
- Progress: Quiet rooms and meeting rooms have been designated for use by employees. Information on appropriate office etiquette was communicated to employees, including guidelines on noise level, cleanliness, personal space, use of scents, and collaboration tools.
- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to consult with employees and seek feedback related to the built environment, to determine if there are any potential barriers for people with disabilities that have not been found or that arise in the future.
- Progress: Consultations have taken place with employees in December 2023. Additional consultations are planned for fiscal year 2024-2025.
- ❑ Facilities Management and Human Resource will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Built Environment](#) in order to further our understanding of the Government of Canada accessibility requirements to ensure that future service contracts include high standards for accessibility.
- Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.

Information and Communication Technologies

- Progress: No new barriers to Information and Communication Technologies have been identified since the publishing of our Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:


- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to promote the existing services for accessibility, accommodations and adaptive computer technology offered through Shared Services Canada which provides services to help integrate employees with disabilities, injuries and ergonomic requirements and who require access to systems, programs, information, computers and computer resources.
- Progress: Polar Knowledge Canada is reviewing its process for handling accommodation and accessibility requests and will begin promoting these resources in fiscal year 2024-2025.
- ❑ Information Management/Information Technology Team along with Human Resources will watch this Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Information Technologies](#) to learn about the latest trends in the industry and share practical strategies to procure, design and implement accessible Information Technology from the start.

- Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.

Communication (non-Information and Communication Technologies)

- Progress: No new barriers related to non-Information and Communication Technologies have been identified since the publishing our Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- The following learning material will be made mandatory for all employees beginning in fiscal year 2023-2024.
 - [Video: Making Documents Accessible](#).
 - Read this [Accessibility Guide](#) to learn how to create accessible documents.
 - Read POLAR's [Writing guide](#) to learn how to write in plain language.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023. The materials have been incorporated into the mandatory list of training for all employees. The Polar Knowledge Canada's Writing Guide was also distributed by email to all employees in January 2024.
- Polar Knowledge Canada has created and will continue to promote on an annual basis this [Document and content accessibility guide](#) as well as this  [Accessibility Guide](#) for accessible writing.
 - Progress: This action was completed in October 2023. The guides were promoted to all employees via Polar Knowledge Canada's "Connexions" intranet site.
- Polar Knowledge Canada is developing a mini-Connexions blog series highlighting sections from their Accessibility Guide.
 - Progress: Work on this project has been started between the Human Resource and the Communication teams. The project plan is for the blog-series to be launched in 2024-2025.
- Polar Knowledge Canada will promote the Canada School of Public Service's [Job aid: Planning Accessible Virtual Events](#) and this [Job aid: Promoting Inclusive Workplaces](#) to managers to help ensure that all meetings are inclusive and barrier free.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023. These resources have been incorporated into the Human Resource tools for supporting managers.
- The Communications Directorate along with Human Resources will watch this Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Communications](#) to ensure that our approach to communications meets or exceeds accessibility requirements and to help identify any potential barriers that currently exist that have not been identified.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

- Progress: No new barriers to procurement have been identified since the publishing of our Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- ❑ Facilities Management and Human Resources will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Built Environment](#) to further our understanding of the Government of Canada accessibility requirements to ensure that any future facility contracts are accessible by design, where possible, so that employees with disabilities can use them without adaptation.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.
- ❑ The procurement team and Human Resources will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Procurement](#) to learn about improving our procurement system using recommendations from the Public Service Accessibility Strategy, as well as read [Public Service & Procurement Canada's Accessible procurement information](#) to ensure that procurement opportunities in the future will have accessibility criteria incorporated from the beginning.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.

Design and delivery of programs and services

- Progress: No new barriers to programs and services have been identified since the creation of Polar Knowledge Canada's Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to consult with people with disabilities on the resources used to ensure our design and delivery of programs and services remain inclusive and barrier free.
 - Progress: Polar Knowledge Canada conducted follow-up consultations with employees in November 2023 and consultation will continue in 2024-2025.
- ❑ The Human Resources team will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Programs and Services](#) to learn how to better design and deliver accessible programs and services and to integrate accessibility considerations early on in program design.
 - Progress: This action was completed in December 2023.

Transportation

- Progress: No new barriers to transportation have been identified since the creations of Polar Knowledge Canada's Accessibility Plan 2022-2023.

Actions:

- ❑ Polar Knowledge Canada will monitor the resources used to ensure our transportation is inclusive and barrier free to people with disabilities.
 - Progress: This action was completed in January 2024. Polar Knowledge Canada has implemented a new Directive on Light-Duty Vehicle Fleet Management and continues to monitor the use of light duty vehicles and vehicle transportation services at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station.

Consultations

Polar Knowledge Canada conducted consultations with our subject matter experts from each of areas described under section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*. Polar Knowledge Canada does not have a formal employee network for persons with disabilities but consulted with a working group of employees that was established to support the development of the Accessibility Plan 2022-2023. Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to conduct consultations with employees, to track progress of action items, and to monitor for new barriers to improve our accessibility for persons with disabilities.