Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations

Descriptions of Feedback Processes

August, 2022

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1. Introduction

Overview

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible Canada Regulations* (regulations) require federally regulated entities to develop a process for receiving and dealing with feedback on:

❖ the manner in which the entity is implementing its accessibility plan
❖ the barriers that the entity's employees encounter
❖ the barriers other people who deal with the entity encounter

This guidance focuses on how entities should prepare and publish a description of that feedback process.

You can also read guidance on:

❖ preparing and publishing accessibility plans
❖ consulting persons with disabilities

In line with the ACA's principles, this guidance reflects insights and input from the disability community.

This guidance is **not** legally binding, but it does describe requirements that are legally binding under the ACA and its regulations. It describes these requirements using the words "must" and "required."

This guidance also contains recommendations, tips, and best practices for helping to ensure that entities' feedback process descriptions are clear, useful, and accessible. This non-binding advice uses the words "recommended," "should," "may," "suggested," and "could."

Regulatory and enforcement authorities

All federally regulated entities must notify the Accessibility Commissioner: when they publish accessibility plans, progress reports, or feedback process descriptions under the *Accessible Canada Regulations*.

Some federally regulated entities engage in operations that may fall under additional sets of regulations under the ACA. Some of these regulations may be made by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) or the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA). This means that some entities may have to notify both the Accessibility Commissioner and either the CRTC or the CTA.

All planning and reporting regulations require regulated entities to publish accessibility plans, progress reports, and feedback process descriptions. The requirements for these documents may differ depending on the applicable regulation.

- For regulated entities who must notify both the Accessibility Commissioner and the CRTC:

  - regulated entities that carry on broadcasting undertakings: read sections 42 to 50 of the ACA
  - regulated entities that are Canadian carriers or telecommunications service providers: read sections 51 to 59 of the ACA
  - read the *CRTC Accessibility Reporting Regulations*
  - read the *Accessible Canada Regulations*

- For regulated entities who must notify both the Accessibility Commissioner and the CTA:

  - regulated entities that are part of the federal transportation network: read sections 60 to 68 of the ACA
  - read the *CTA Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations*
  - read the *Accessible Canada Regulations*

- For all other regulated entities, who must notify only the Accessibility Commissioner:

  - read sections 69 to 72 of the ACA
  - read the *Accessible Canada Regulations*

Note: regulated entities who must notify the CRTC have earlier deadlines for publishing their feedback process descriptions. They must publish those descriptions by the end of the day that the CRTC's regulations fix for that entity.

- Read sections 2 and 3 of the *CRTC Accessibility Reporting Regulations* to determine the classes of broadcasting entity and their fixed days
- Read sections 18 and 19 of the *CRTC Accessibility Reporting Regulations* to determine the classes of telecommunications entities and their fixed days

Organizations notifying both the Accessibility Commissioner and either the CRTC or the CTA do not have to establish or describe two separate feedback processes. We recommend that they instead prepare and publish a single description of a single feedback process that meets the requirements set by all authorities. The benefits of establishing and describing a single feedback process include:

- reducing the time and resources the entity will need to prepare, publish, and update their descriptions
- ensuring consistency in how all parts of their organizations receive and deal with feedback, regardless of which authorities they must notify
- ensuring consistency in how all parts of their organizations identify, remove, and prevent barriers

- making it easier for employees, clients, persons with disabilities at large, and other members of the public to find and read the entity's description

Basic principles

Section 6 of the ACA sets out principles that your organization must take into account in carrying out its obligations under the ACA. You must take these principles into account when establishing and describing your feedback process.

With these principles in mind, this guidance will help you ensure that your feedback process:

- offers accessible means by which people can submit feedback to your organization about barriers and the implementation of your accessibility plans
- applies a consistent approach to how your organization receives and deals with this feedback
- allows your organization to account for the feedback you have received when you write your progress reports

2. Feedback processes and descriptions: key concepts

Feedback

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible Canada Regulations* (regulations) require that your organization develop an accessibility feedback process.

Feedback is information you receive through the process that the ACA requires you to establish. This information is related to:

- the barriers that your employees encounter
- the barriers that other people who deal with your organization encounter
- the manner in which you are implementing your accessibility plan

   o read the guidance on preparing and publishing accessibility plans

The feedback that you receive may be:

- positive or critical
- general or specific
- lengthy or brief
- identified or anonymous

Regardless of the perspective a piece of feedback offers, the regulations require that you:

- acknowledge your receipt of any non-anonymous feedback you receive through your feedback process
- send this acknowledgement through the same means by which you received the feedback

- ❖ retain an electronic copy or print copy of any feedback you receive, identified or anonymous, for 7 years after the day that you receive it
  - o this includes feedback you receive by telephone
  - o it also includes feedback you may receive by any other means your organization uses to communicate with the public

When you publish a progress report, it must include a "Feedback" heading. Your report must provide information about the feedback you have received through your feedback process, and about how you have taken it into consideration.

Feedback processes are ongoing and open to anyone.

Additional guidance on progress reports will be available in 2022.

Consultation input versus feedback

For the purposes of the ACA and its regulations, keep in mind that there is a difference between consultation input and feedback:

- ❖ consultation input is comments you receive when you consult persons with disabilities
- ❖ feedback is comments you receive through your feedback process

Consultation input is information that your organization receives when it consults persons with disabilities as it prepares its accessibility plans and progress reports.

Consultation input is targeted and time limited.

Any information you provide about your consultation process, including about input given by participants, should appear under the "Consultations" heading.

For more information:

- ❖ [read the guidance on preparing the "Consultations" heading for an accessibility plan](#)
- ❖ [read the guidance on consulting persons with disabilities](#)

Feedback processes

Since organizations have different resources, needs, and capabilities, there are different ways to create and maintain a feedback process. Your organization must decide how you will receive and deal with feedback.

Your process for receiving and dealing with feedback must:

- ❖ designate a person to receive that feedback, and provide that person's position title
- ❖ establish how people can submit feedback by:
  - o mail

- o telephone
- o email
- o any other means your organization uses to communicate with the public
- ❖ establish how people can submit feedback anonymously
- ❖ account for how you will acknowledge each piece of feedback you receive by the same means in which you receive it
    - o **remember:** you do not have to acknowledge receipt of anonymous feedback
- ❖ ensure that you can retain electronic or print copies of each piece of feedback for at least 7 years

You must also make sure that your process for receiving and dealing with feedback:

- ❖ establishes how you will take that feedback into consideration
- ❖ enables you to describe that feedback, and how you have taken it into consideration, in your progress reports

Feedback process descriptions

Your organization must prepare and publish a description of your feedback process. The description should explain how your organization receives and deals with feedback. It should also reiterate the position title of the person you have designated to receive feedback on your organization's behalf.

Your description could also:

- ❖ explain how people can submit feedback, including anonymously
- ❖ provide contributors with a timeline for when they can expect you to acknowledge your receipt of their feedback
- ❖ explain what your acknowledgement will include
- ❖ describe how you plan to take feedback into consideration
- ❖ explain how people can request a copy of your description in an alternate format

Your organization must publish this description of your feedback process at the same time as you publish your initial accessibility plan. Read the guidance on requirements (such as format and location) for publishing the description.

Remember: if you amend your feedback process, you must publish a new description of that process. Read the guidance on amending your feedback process.

3. Establishing a feedback process: receiving feedback

Overview

The description of your accessibility feedback process must explain how your organization will receive and deal with feedback about your accessibility plan or about barriers people encounter.

You can read the guidance sections on dealing with feedback and on publishing the feedback process description. This section provides tips, recommendations and best practices for establishing a process to receive feedback.

As you establish this process, here are some preliminary steps that we recommend:

- review your organization's existing process for receiving feedback on other topics
  - o confirm whether your organization already has the capacity to receive, capture and acknowledge feedback by any means you use to communicate with the public
  - o you may be able to adapt some of this process to feedback about barriers or the implementation of your accessibility plan

- consider whether your feedback process description explains how you will receive and acknowledge feedback through any means of communication your organization may use
  - o for example, if you allow people to submit feedback through email forms or comment boxes on your website, explain how you will acknowledge receipt

Organizations may want to consider creating service standards for how – and how quickly – people can expect you to acknowledge their feedback. It could also include setting a budget for your feedback process.

Setting a budget may help you ensure that your feedback process remains accessible, consistent, and manageable. Budget planning for this process could help you:

- identify and allocate resources to improve how you receive and act on common or recurring feedback
- adapt or revise your feedback process in response to suggestions from employees, clients, or other persons who deal with your organization
- remain consistent in upholding any service standards you set for how quickly you will acknowledge feedback and what that acknowledgement will involve

Designating a person to receive feedback

The regulations require that you designate a person responsible for receiving feedback on your organization's behalf. You must provide that person's position title under the "General" heading of your organization's accessibility plans and progress reports.

You could consider designating a person who is involved in preparing and implementing your accessibility plan, or who works closely with those who do. The person you designate may be responsible for activities that include:

- organizing feedback submissions and any notes about them
- analyzing feedback contents
- forwarding feedback to the relevant divisions and persons within your organisation for their consideration
- preserving electronic or print copies of feedback, including feedback you receive by telephone or by other means your organization uses to communicate with the public
- using feedback to help identify, prevent and remove barriers in a timely manner

Means of receiving feedback: overview

Your organization's feedback process must allow people to submit feedback by certain methods of communication. You should take into account how people will submit it, and what you must do in response, including how you collect it. You should also plan for how you will allow people to submit feedback anonymously.

Your process for receiving feedback sets the terms for how people can submit that feedback. A clear description of this will reassure contributors that they are submitting feedback to the right person and place. It can also help your organization keep track of all of the feedback and other input you may receive.

Your process must establish how people can submit feedback to you by:

- mail
- telephone
- email
- any other means that your organization uses to communicate with the public

Receiving feedback by mail

Some people may send you feedback by mail or courier.

You must provide the mailing address of your publicly accessible business(es) to which people can deliver such feedback. This mailing address must appear under the "General" heading of your accessibility plans and progress reports. Your feedback process description should

include this address, and provide any additional details that people may need to mail you feedback.

Procedure:

- ❖ your procedures will determine how you retain relevant details (such as the date of receipt or information about the contributor) about mail feedback
- ❖ these may include your procedures for retaining envelopes, packaging, or other accompanying materials
- ❖ they also may include procedures for how employees handle mail feedback that is not a written document (such as a video or photographs)

If you have established procedures for how employees will handle mail feedback, you could include details about these procedures in the description as well.

Receiving feedback by telephone

Some people may send you feedback via the telephone number you provide.

Procedure:

- ❖ your procedures will determine how you retain accurate copies of such feedback, especially when it involves a conversation rather than the contributor leaving a message
- ❖ ensure employees receive training in how to create a transcript, if necessary, either electronically or manually
- ❖ employees should also allow the contributor to confirm that the employee has captured their feedback accurately

People who are deaf or are hard of hearing can provide feedback in American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) or Indigenous Sign Language (ISL) via telephone using a Video Relay Service (VRS). These services are available to all Canadians at no cost. Read more about how the VRS works.

You must provide the telephone number that people can use to submit feedback. This telephone number must appear under the "General" heading of your accessibility plans and progress reports. Your feedback process description should include this number, and provide any additional details that people may need to submit feedback by telephone.

For example, you could:

- ❖ explain whether someone is responsible for answering calls to that number, or whether calls will go straight to a message recording service
- ❖ provide the hours of availability for anyone responsible for answering
- ❖ tell potential contributors whether they will have to navigate an options menu when they call, and if so, what options they could choose

If you have established procedures for how employees will handle telephone feedback, you could include details about these procedures in the description as well.

Receiving feedback by email

Some people may send you feedback by email.

You must provide an email address through which people can submit such feedback. This email address must appear under the "General" heading of your accessibility plans and progress reports. Your feedback process description should include this email address, and provide any additional details that people may need to submit feedback by email.

For example, you could:

- explain whether there are limits on the size and type of files that people can attach to feedback they submit
- describe how people can send feedback through an email form on your main digital platform, if you provide such a form

Procedure:

- your procedures will determine how you receive and store copies of such feedback
- these may include your procedures for how employees handle email feedback that includes video, audio, or graphic attachments
- they also may include your procedures for retaining relevant contributor information, including through each email's unique header

If you have established procedures for how employees will handle email feedback, you could include details about these procedures in the description as well.

Receiving feedback by other means an organization uses to communicate with the public

Your organization may communicate with the public by means other than mail, telephone, or email. If so, your feedback process must account for how your organization will receive and deal with feedback someone submits by those means.

Provided your organization uses them to communicate with the public, such means may include:

- an in-person service desk that the public uses to interact with your organization
- a web portal or other digital platform that belongs to your organization
- an active social media account on a third-party digital platform like Twitter or Facebook

Regardless of what other means you use to communicate with the public, here are some general principles to keep in mind:

- your feedback process description should set out how people can submit feedback through these other means
- this description could include the URLs of any digital platforms and social media accounts that you use for communicating with the public
- you could provide any additional details that someone might need to submit feedback through these other means; for example:
  - if there is an in-person service desk, list its hours of operation
  - if there is a social media account, set out how contributors can provide feedback publicly or through private messages
  - if there is a digital platform, and especially a third-party digital platform, remind contributors about any registration or security requirements
- if your organization communicates through a digital platform or social media account, we recommend you make sure you have someone monitoring that platform and keeping track of submissions

Procedure:

- your procedures will depend on what other means your organization uses in this way
- these may include how and when employees monitor or engage in these other means, and how you acknowledge feedback you receive through them

If you have established procedures for how employees will handle such feedback, you could include details about these procedures in the description as well.

Receiving anonymous feedback

Your feedback process description must explain that people can provide feedback anonymously. Your feedback process description should explain how contributors can provide feedback without having to disclose their identity.

Anonymous feedback can be beneficial for your organization, your employees, and the public. It can allow certain contributors to provide honest feedback without fear of possible repercussions for doing so. These contributors might include:

- employees, including those with disabilities, who have concerns about privacy
- individuals belonging to equity-seeking groups who are more likely to experience certain kinds of barriers
  - read the guidance annex on cultural and intersectional considerations
- persons with disabilities who are concerned that stigma may be attached to disability or requests for accessibility measures

Your organization does not need to acknowledge the receipt of anonymous feedback, but both identified and anonymous feedback are equally valid and important.

Your progress report may describe how you took any type of feedback into consideration, identified or anonymous. You must also retain electronic or print copies of anonymous feedback for at least 7 years.

4. Establishing a feedback process: dealing with feedback

Overview

The description of feedback processes must include how your organization will receive and deal with feedback about the implementation of your accessibility plan or about barriers people encounter. Your feedback process description should explain to contributors what they can expect to happen when they send you feedback.

You can read the guidance sections on receiving feedback and on publishing your description. This guidance section provides tips, recommendations and best practices for dealing with feedback.

The ACA and its regulations set some requirements for how you must deal with the feedback you receive. Among other things, you must:

- acknowledge your receipt of all non-anonymous feedback by the same means in which you receive it
- keep electronic or print copies of all feedback you receive for at least 7 years from the day on which you receive it
- provide information, under the "Feedback" heading in your progress report, about the feedback you receive and how you take it into consideration

Nevertheless, organizations have different resources, needs, and capabilities. They serve different clients and provide different services. As such, the ACA and its regulations do not mandate any one specific way in which you must:

- respond to contributors beyond acknowledging receipt of their feedback
- take that feedback into consideration
- organize that feedback and plan any actions you will take as a result

You will choose how to approach these actions in a way that best reflects the principles set out in section 6 of the ACA. You will also choose how feedback informs your efforts to identify and remove existing barriers, and to prevent new barriers from forming.

This guidance section provides some tips, recommendations and best practices for how your organization could approach these decisions.

Acknowledging feedback

Your organization must acknowledge your receipt of any non-anonymous feedback. This means that you must communicate with the feedback contributor to confirm that you received their feedback.

You must send this acknowledgement in the same means by which you received it. These means include mail, telephone, email, or any other means your organization uses to communicate with the public.

As you establish your process for acknowledging feedback, here are some additional recommendations:

- your feedback process could set the service standards and timeline for when you will send acknowledgements or any other responses
  - you should acknowledge feedback as quickly as possible after you receive it
- consider sending a personal acknowledgement rather than relying on automatic or generic acknowledgements
  - you should address the contributor by name, thank them for their submission, and acknowledge the specifics of their feedback
  - you may also follow up with more detailed replies once those responsible for implementing your accessibility plan have assessed the feedback
- offer to add contributors (with their consent) to contact lists for future accessibility announcements, consultation planning, or other events

Preserving copies of feedback

The regulations require that you retain a copy of each piece of feedback you receive. You must retain that feedback, in electronic or print form, for a period of 7 years beginning on the day that you receive it. You must retain feedback even when it is anonymous.

How you choose to preserve electronic or print copies of feedback will depend, in part, on the means by which you receive it. Here are some things we recommend that you keep in mind:

- while feedback you receive by email or by mail will already be in an electronic or print format, consider making copies for security and consistency
- preserving an electronic or print copy of feedback you receive by telephone will require that you create either a transcript or a recording
  - the process you establish for receiving feedback could include how you plan to produce and verify the accuracy of such transcripts or recordings
  - ensure that feedback contributors are aware that their telephone conversations with your representatives could be recorded, if applicable

- preserving feedback you may receive by other means your organization uses to communicate with the public may also require additional planning and training
  - for example, plan to save copies of feedback you receive through means like social media platforms, keeping in mind that:
    - the original submissions may not remain accessible online indefinitely
    - contributors may also remove or edit their original submissions
    - some contributors may submit non-text feedback by these means (such as through video recordings or images)

As you preserve and categorize feedback, you could also keep a record of how you respond to that feedback. This is especially important if you respond to feedback with more than an acknowledgement, or act on it soon after you receive it. It can also help you set out information, under your progress report's "Feedback" heading, about feedback you received and how you took it into consideration.

We recommend that you keep a chronological list or log of feedback you receive and of anything you do as a result of that feedback. You could account for some or all of the following, when applicable:

- for all feedback
  - who sent it, what it said, and when you received it
  - who within your organization responded to it, and what that response was
  - what anyone within your organization did about the feedback, including any costs or resources this involved

- for feedback on the implementation of your accessibility plans
  - when you published the version of the plan that the feedback addressed
  - what aspect of the plan the feedback addressed
  - what the person(s) responsible for implementing the plan said or did about this feedback

- for feedback on barriers
  - the nature and location of the barrier
  - the relevant area from section 5 of the ACA under which the barrier might fit
  - what was done to remove the barrier, and by whom
  - what was done to prevent the creation of new barriers in the process of addressing the barriers that the feedback identified

Remember to respect and preserve the privacy of anyone who submits feedback to your organization.

Organizing and analyzing feedback

You may receive and consider feedback in multiple forms, including written submissions, phone calls, emails, or others. To analyse feedback, you may have to compare different types of feedback in a way that allows you to respond to them consistently and effectively.

One approach is to categorize and sort feedback by creating metadata, or short descriptive tags, for each piece of feedback. A simple way to think about metadata is that it is "information about information." This might include, when applicable:

- the element of your accessibility plan that the feedback addresses
- the type of barrier it identifies
- the length and depth of the feedback
- the relevant areas in section 5 of the ACA
- whether it is positive, negative or neutrally informative
- who sent the feedback, and when

It can help to compile these details into a basic data entry system or spreadsheet. Organizing your feedback in this way can help you describe it more accurately, such as under your progress report's "Feedback" heading.

For example:

- "35 out of 40 feedback submissions say that removing attitudinal barriers is just as important as removing physical barriers"
- "85% of feedback contributors said we have made significant progress in implementing our accessibility plan"
- "contributors with learning disabilities were 3 times more likely than others to say our website needs significant accessibility improvements"

This basic data may help you find trends or even gaps in how people are responding to your organization's efforts to improve accessibility.

Taking feedback into consideration

The ACA requires that your progress reports include information about the feedback you receive through your feedback process and how you take it into consideration. How you take feedback into consideration could depend on:

- the topic and nature of the feedback you receive
- the resources, including employees, available to your organization
- when you receive that feedback within your planning and reporting cycle
- what will best support your efforts to identify, remove, and prevent barriers

We recommend that you consider feedback within the context of your obligations under the ACA and its regulations. When you develop a consistent and effective approach to how you consider feedback, it ensures that feedback can help you:

* identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in your organization
* better fulfill your planning and reporting requirements, such as reporting on progress in implementing your accessibility plan
* refine and improve how you consult persons with disabilities in preparing your accessibility plans and progress reports
* ensure that the planning and reporting documents you publish are accessible, informative, and written in language that is simple, clear and concise

5. Publishing and handling your feedback process description

Overview

Remember: The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible Canada Regulations* (regulations) require that you **publish** a description of your feedback process.

The ACA and its regulations do not specify minimum or maximum lengths for your feedback process description.

Your feedback process description must meet certain requirements set in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Specifically, it must meet the requirements for Level AA conformance in the most recent WCAG available in both French and English, which is presently WCAG 2.1.

You can also consult the Digital Accessibility Toolkit and the Canada.ca Content Style Guide for recommendations on creating accessible documents.

Simple, clear, and concise language

The regulations require that you publish your accessibility plans, progress reports, and descriptions of your feedback process in language that is simple, clear, and concise. Doing so will ensure that they are easy to read and understand.

This means that, when possible, you should:

* keep your sentences short and direct
* avoid or reduce the use of technical words or industry jargon
* be consistent in what words and phrases you use to describe things

In short, someone who knows nothing about your organization or its work should be able to understand the feedback process description's contents.

Additional guidance on the use of simple, clear and concise language will be available in the coming months.

Conformance to WCAG 2.1 at Level AA

The digital version of your feedback process description must fulfill certain requirements set in the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](#). Specifically, it must meet the requirements for Level AA conformance set out in the most recent WCAG version available in both French and English. This is currently [WCAG 2.1.](#)

Note: Level AA conformance means that the digital platform satisfies all the Level A **and** Level AA success criteria. Whenever your organization amends the digital version of your feedback process description, the amended version must also meet these requirements.

Where to publish your feedback process descriptions

You must publish your description on the main digital platform that you own, operate, or control, and that you use to communicate with the public.

Whatever digital platform you use, you must either:

- publish the description on that platform's homepage or home screen, or
- provide a hyperlink on that platform's homepage or home screen that leads to the description

Whichever you choose, you should display the description or the link leading to it in a way that is prominent and easily findable. For example, you could place it near your latest accessibility plan and progress report on your homepage or home screen. You do not have to publish your description and your plan in the same document.

If your organization does not have a digital platform, you must print a copy of your description and display it with your accessibility plan. You must display these documents in the reception area or entrance of each of your organization's places of business. The documents must be clearly visible and accessible to the public.

When to publish your feedback process descriptions

Remember: you must publish a description of your feedback process **at the same time** that you publish your first accessibility plan. This does not mean that you must include the description and the plan in the same document.

Regulated entities must publish their first accessibility plans within 1 year (12 months) after the day fixed in the regulations. The dates fixed in the *Accessible Canada Regulations* produce the following deadlines for publishing initial accessibility plans and feedback process descriptions:

- federal government entities, including departments, agencies, Crown corporations, or government-related entities such as the Canadian Forces or Parliamentary entities: by **December 31, 2022**
- federally regulated private sector entities with an average of 100 or more employees: by **June 1, 2023**
- federally regulated private sector entities with an average of between 10 and 99 employees: by **June 1, 2024**

Read [subsections 1(2) and 1(3) of the regulations](#) to learn how to calculate your average number of employees. You can also consult the [Accessibility web pages of the CHRC's web site](#) for examples of these calculations.

Note: The deadlines above apply to regulated entities that are not exempt, and that existed and were subject to the ACA during 2021. The regulations fix different dates determining initial accessibility plan deadlines for regulated entities that were once exempt, but are no longer exempt. They also fix different dates determining initial accessibility plan deadlines for entities that came into existence after the regulations went into force.

Such entities must also publish their initial accessibility plan within 1 year (12 months) after the day fixed in the regulations. They must also publish their feedback process descriptions at the same time that they publish their initial accessibility plans. Consult [sections 4(2) and 4(3) of the regulations](#) to determine the deadlines for such entities.

Regulated entities must also publish a new description of their feedback process, as soon as is feasible, whenever they change the feedback process itself.

Exemptions

Not all organizations to which the ACA and its regulations apply need to publish a description of their feedback process. The regulations set out the details of these exemptions.

- [Exemptions for organizations described in paragraph 7(1)(e) or (f) of the ACA, and that have an average of fewer than 10 employees](#)
- [Exemptions for First Nations Band Councils, applying for a period of 5 years from the day (December 13, 2021) that the regulations came into force](#)

Notifying the Accessibility Commissioner and other authorities

Your organization must [notify the Accessibility Commissioner](#) within 48 hours of publishing any version of your feedback process description. The Accessibility Commissioner is a member of the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC).

You must send your notification messages to the Accessibility Commissioner by email or other electronic means. Each message must include the URL, hyperlink, or physical address(es) of where you have posted your description. You must send a notification message whenever you publish an amended version of your feedback process description as well.

Remember: the regulations require that you publish the description of your organization's feedback process at the same time as you publish your initial accessibility plan. You must still notify the Accessibility Commissioner about both documents. You may send a separate notification message for each document, or send both notifications in a single message. Remember to include the appropriate URLs, hyperlinks or physical addresses for both documents.

[Read the guidance section on the notification responsibilities of entities that also report to the CRTC or the CTA](#).

Amending the feedback process

If you amend your organization's feedback process, you must publish a description of the new version of the process as soon as feasible. You can change your feedback process, and amend your description, at any time.

Requests for alternate formats of your feedback process description

The regulations say that you must make a copy of your feedback process description available in the following formats upon request:

- ❖ print
- ❖ large print (larger and clearer font)
- ❖ Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- ❖ audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud)
- ❖ electronic (an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist persons with disabilities)

People may submit these requests using the contact information you include under the "General" heading in your accessibility plans or progress reports. You could retain electronic or print copies of such requests in the same way that you must retain copies of feedback.

You must fulfil these requests as soon as is feasible, and no later than the deadlines below. These deadlines depend on the size and sector of the entity, as well as the type of format someone requests.

- ❖ For print, large print, and electronic formats:

  - o federal government entities, including departments, agencies, Crown corporations, or government-related entities such as the Canadian Forces or Parliamentary entities: **within 15 days** after the day you received the request
  - o federally regulated private sector entities with an average of 100 or more employees: **within 15 days** after the day you received the request
  - o federally regulated private sector entities with an average of 99 or fewer employees: **within 20 days** after the day you received the request

- ❖ For braille or audio formats:

  - o all entities: **within 45 days** after the day your received the request

Read subsections 1(2) and 1(3) of the regulations to learn how to calculate your average number of employees. You can also consult the Accessibility Commissioner's website for examples of these calculations[1].

Retaining copies of your feedback process description

You must retain a copy of your feedback process description for whichever period is longer:

- ❖ a period of seven years beginning on the day on which you publish the description, or
- ❖ a period beginning on the day on which you publish the description, and ending on the day on which you publish a new description

If you have a digital platform that is accessible to the public, you must retain the description on that platform. If you do not have such a platform, you must retain an electronic or print copy of the description that is accessible to the public.

Remember: your organization must also keep an electronic or print copy of any feedback you receive for 7 years from the day you receive it. You must also comply with any applicable privacy laws or regulations, such as the *Privacy Act* or the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*.

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[1] Add hyperlink to AC calculation section once published

6. Looking ahead: feedback and the planning and reporting cycle

Overview

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible Canada Regulations* (regulations) require that federally regulated entities participate in an accessibility planning and reporting cycle. This cycle includes the publication of accessibility plans and progress reports.

Accessibility plans

Under the *Accessible Canada Regulations*, you must publish a description of your feedback process **at the same time** that you publish your first accessibility plan. Read the guidance section on different entities' deadlines for publishing their first plans.

Read the guidance on preparing and publishing accessibility plans for additional details.

Progress reports

Each of your progress reports on the implementation of your accessibility plans must include a "General" heading. Under this heading, you must provide the same information as you provide under the "General" heading in your accessibility plan.

Additional guidance on progress reports will be available in 2022.

Amending your feedback process and publishing a new description

The ACA and its regulations establish a regular cycle for regulated entities to publish their initial accessibility plan, progress reports and updated accessibility plans. They do not establish such a cycle for amending feedback processes or publishing new descriptions of those processes.

Nevertheless, whenever an entity amends its feedback process, it must publish a description of the new version of that process. It must fulfill the same requirements when publishing a new description as it did when publishing the original one. Read the guidance on publication requirements for feedback process descriptions.

Organizations have different resources, needs, and capabilities. They serve different clients and provide different services. How and when they update their feedback processes may depend on:

- ❖ what feedback they receive about the implementation of their accessibility plans, and what progress they are making in that implementation
- ❖ what feedback process best helps them identify, remove, and prevent barriers in their policies, programs, practices, services, and spaces

An organization may also be required to amend their feedback process and publish a new description if:

- ❖ the latest version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) available in French and English changes, and the description no longer meets Level AA requirements
- ❖ there is a change to any elements of the feedback process that the description describes, and the description is no longer accurate
- ❖ something should arise from an interaction with the Accessibility Commissioner's inspector

As you plan whether or not to amend your organization's feedback process, you may wish to consider some or all of the following:

- ❖ whether something has changed in how you intend to receive or deal with feedback
- ❖ whether the existing feedback process is generating the amount and type of feedback you require
- ❖ whether you are receiving feedback more frequently through some means of communication than others, and why this might be so
- ❖ whether changes that may have taken place in your organization's operations, structure or resources would make a new feedback process desirable
- ❖ whether your organization has begun to communicate with the public through a means for which the current feedback process does not yet account