Employment and Social Development Canada 3-year accessibility plan – 2025

Accessibility is everyone's business

December 3, 2025

ESDC Accessibility Office, Human Resources Services Branch

Employment and Social Development Canada 3-year accessibility plan – 2025

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1. About this plan

This accessibility plan applies to 2 regulated organizations:

- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
- Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC)

ESDC administers the Employment Insurance (EI) Program on behalf of the CEIC. This means that the policies, programs, processes, and practices that ESDC uses to carry out its operations also apply to the CEIC.

This is our second accessibility plan, following the ESDC 3-year accessibility plan that was published in December 2022. Our guiding principle continues to be, “Nothing Without Us,” highlighting the importance of engaging with and actively listening to the voices of persons with disabilities to ensure equal opportunities for everyone.

Our consultation strategy focuses on working together, being open about what we do, and taking responsibility for our actions. Building on our achievements and lessons learned, we are dedicated to our vision of becoming a leader in public service accessibility. This commitment is not just an aspiration; it is supported by tangible actions.

Over the past 3 years, we have laid a strong foundation through improved measurement, reporting, and impact assessment. Our approach in developing this accessibility plan is both robust and strategically focused on enhancing disability inclusion through the identification and removal of barriers to accessibility.

Our plan is guided by the following strategic goals, which we pursue collaboratively.

- **Prioritize impact measurement**: we broadened our focus on identifying and removing accessibility barriers by shifting our emphasis from merely completing tasks to understanding the impact of our actions. This approach strengthens our accessibility measures and performance indicators to help close the experience gaps between persons with disabilities and those without disabilities. By addressing identified barriers upfront, we can foster a more inclusive environment where everyone has equal access and opportunities.
- **Apply an intersectional lens**: we considered intersecting identities in our consultation strategy. This will enable us to understand the unique challenges and lived experiences faced by persons with disabilities who may also encounter barriers related to other equity factors. By doing this, we can more effectively identify and address their specific needs, leading to the development of more inclusive solutions.
- **Implement accessibility from the start**: we consulted with more than 800 employees across ESDC, including the Accessibility Advisory Group, and used survey data to apply user insights and recommendations into our plan’s development process. Our goal is to consider the needs of persons with disabilities from the start to prevent the creation of new barriers and ensure our actions are responsive.

2. Message from the Deputy Ministers

We are pleased to present ESDC's 3-year accessibility plan for 2025 to 2028, an essential step toward creating a truly inclusive workplace for everyone. This plan complies with the *Accessible Canada Act* and Regulations and covers all aspects of ESDC, including the operations of Service Canada, the Labour Program, and the Canada Employment Insurance Commission.

ESDC is one of Canada's largest federal departments, with more than 40,000 employees. With millions of client interactions annually, **accessibility is not optional; it is essential**.

ESDC is dedicated to leading by example. This plan to advance accessibility is not just a legal requirement, it is a strategic roadmap for identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Much of our progress since our last report would not have been possible without extensive collaboration and the feedback received. We thank all teams and networks, especially the Employees with Disabilities Network, for their vital contributions. Their efforts continue to empower our department to promote accessibility and foster a culture of inclusion that celebrates diversity.

Some of the important advancements we have made over the last year include:

- hiring 397 persons with disabilities, exceeding our target based on workforce availability
- strengthening our Accessibility Performance Measurement Framework to better assess our efforts using outcome-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- establishing an Accessibility Advisory Group whose active membership includes more than 35 employees with disabilities

While we have made important progress, we recognize that barriers to accessibility still exist in our policies, programs and services. This new plan is ambitious and focuses on exploring new strategic approaches to achieve our vision of becoming a leader in public service accessibility, while continuing to embed the principle of "Nothing Without Us" in our approach.

To develop this plan, we incorporated recommendations and insights from the Accessibility Advisory Group, members of the Employees with Disabilities Network and other employee networks and consulted more than 800 employees from diverse backgrounds. We recognize that different identities within the disability community shape unique lived experiences, and our goal is to create a barrier-free environment for everyone from the start.

This includes important improvements to our accommodations process by:

- applying insights from the Better Accommodation Project (BAP), which identified key improvements and pain points. We are developing a best-in-class approach grounded in the social model of disability to ensure timely, effective, and efficient support
- integrating the digital version of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport. By embedding the Passport into our accommodation process, we help support open conversations between employees and managers about workplace barriers and solutions

We will also implement the following:

- enhance our human resources (HR) digital processes to align with the accessibility criteria from Accessibility Standards Canada when developing new features and modules
- ensure our buildings include accessible spaces and meet accessibility standards
- improve IT tools, communications, and procurement to embed accessibility from the start
- make it easier for clients with disabilities to find, understand, and access information about our programs and services through improvements to in-person, phone, and online channels. This includes simplifying application forms, enhancing accessibility of the Service Canada website, and increasing access to sensory-friendly spaces in Service Canada Centres, among other improvements

We will continuously monitor our progress and welcome feedback from clients and employees about the barriers they face. We will improve how we collect and act on feedback to ensure continuous progress.

Our department is committed to delivering secure, accessible, and user-friendly services while creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. Accessibility is everyone's business at ESDC and, as senior leaders, we will set the bar high for what an accessible and inclusive best-in-class department looks and feels like.

Together, we will continue to make progress toward a barrier-free Canada.

Cliff Groen
(He/him/his)
Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development and Chief Operating Officer for Service Canada

Sandra Hassan
(She/her/hers)
Deputy Minister of Labour and Associate Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development

John Ostrander
(He/him/his)
Business Lead, Benefits Delivery Modernization, Employment and Social Development

Paul Thompson
(He/him/his)
Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development

3. Message from the Employees with Disabilities Network

As the Chair and Co-chair of the Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), we are proud to highlight the essential role that employees with disabilities play in advancing ESDC's accessibility efforts. Our network demonstrates the strength of collective voices and shared experiences in creating meaningful change.

Looking ahead to the next 3 years, we recognize the complex challenges present within our network. Many members deal with multiple barriers that arise from the intersection of disability with other aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and age. By embracing these differences, we can ensure our initiatives are truly inclusive and continue to uphold the principle of "Nothing Without Us."

We want to recognize the important contributions of the Black Employee Network, Employee Pride Network, Visible Minorities Network, the Women's Network, and the Indigenous Employees' Circle. Their participation in discussions about the unique experiences of employees with disabilities in our organization has been invaluable.

These conversations showed how intersecting identities, including disability, shape workplace experiences and highlight the distinct barriers faced by employees navigating multiple social identities. Together, we are committed to creating an inclusive workplace where every employee feels supported and empowered to succeed. We know that the diverse perspectives of employees with intersecting identities enrich our culture and help improve our efforts in accessibility and inclusion.

We acknowledge the progress ESDC has made over the past 3 years. Grassroots initiatives led by employees across the department continue to move change forward. We have seen increased accessibility training, focused efforts in streamlining the accommodation process, and more inclusive events.

However, while we have made some progress, many barriers remain, and new challenges continue to arise in our evolving work environment. As an organization, we must focus on growing awareness of disability issues at all levels of the organization and make a concerted effort to thoroughly remove these barriers. The responsibility for advocacy and change should not fall solely on employees and clients with disabilities.

In 2025, it is crucial to maintain fully supported and engaged employee networks. The EwDN and other employee networks at ESDC provide more than just a safe space for employees with disabilities and their allies; it serves as a vital link between the lived experiences of our members and the decision-making processes of our department.

We are grateful for the dedicated leadership that supports our network, including our Champion, Darren Deneumoustier, and Senior Associate Deputy Minister Tina Namiesniowski, the Deputy Minister Sponsor for the ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network and Deputy Minister Champion for Employees with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service. Their commitment to going beyond legal requirements sets a powerful example for the entire department.

As we reflect on the challenges of 2025 and look ahead to the opportunities in the next 3 years, we invite all ESDC employees, both with and without disabilities, to join us in our mission. Together, we can create a truly accessible and inclusive workplace where everyone can reach their full potential.

The journey toward full accessibility is ongoing, but with your support and commitment, we are confident we can continue to make meaningful changes. Let's work together to build an ESDC where accessibility is not just a goal but a fundamental part of our organizational culture.

Sherri Macki
(She/her/hers)
Chair, Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), Employment and Social Development

Laurie Ward
(She/her/hers)
Co-chair, Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), Employment and Social Development

4. Executive summary

The *Accessible Canada Act*, passed in 2019, aims for a barrier-free Canada by 2040. To help achieve this goal, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC) must develop and publish an accessibility plan every 3 years, and report on progress in between.

Our 2025 accessibility plan aligns with "Nothing Without Us: An Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada." Under the *Act*, regulated organizations must identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in the following priority areas:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than ICT
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation (does not apply to our plan currently)

As in our 2022 accessibility plan, we have also included 2 more priority areas, not required by the *Act,* that reflect what we heard in our consultations:

- workplace culture
- data, research and analysis

ESDC, one of the largest federal departments with over 40,000 employees, supports Canadians through key programs like Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan, and the Canada Disability Benefit, with Service Canada as the main access point.

Accomplishments to date

Since the launch of our first accessibility plan, we have made important strides in improving our services and work environment, as highlighted in the 2024 progress report.

To support our employees, we established the **Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential** focused on workplace accommodations, taking a comprehensive approach to ensure everyone feels valued and supported.

In our commitment to the built environment, we updated **ESDC's interior design standards** to go beyond the minimum accessibility requirements, specifically addressing the needs of persons with invisible disabilities. This proactive step ensures that our spaces are welcoming and accessible for all.

Recognizing the importance of technology, we explored new options to **enhance our capacity for usability and accessibility testing** within our Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), aiming to make our tools more user-friendly for everyone.

In the area of communications, we prioritized accessibility by ensuring our meetings and materials were easy to access and understand. All documents published under proactive disclosure rules underwent a

thorough review, and we updated our guide, **"A Way with Words and Images,"** which assists federal employees in communicating about disabilities.

We also took meaningful action in our procurement processes. By exploring ways to prioritize the purchase of accessibility-related goods and services, we responded effectively to accommodation requests. Our procurement officers underwent **training to help managers consider accessibility features from the outset**, and we made it mandatory to conduct accessibility assessments for project approvals.

Our commitment to programs and services led us to enhance training for ESDC employees, empowering them to better support clients with disabilities. Many clients reported improvements in service delivery, commending front-line staff at **Service Canada Centres for their respect and helpfulness**.

Our **Video Remote Interpretation** (VRI) services received outstanding feedback, with an impressive 86.9% of clients awarding them a perfect 5-star rating for their effectiveness in breaking down language barriers. Additionally, we partnered with an accessibility provider to improve wayfinding through the use of **Bluetooth Smart beacons**, enhancing navigation for those who require support.

To cultivate a workplace culture that fosters inclusion, we developed strategies to raise awareness about accessibility and disability inclusion. We **centralized our accessibility training** and reviewed our internal governance to implement necessary adjustments that promote a more inclusive environment.

In terms of data and research, we developed a **robust performance measurement framework for the ESDC accessibility plan**, utilizing evidence-based data to track our progress and assess the impact of our efforts.

While we have made progress in addressing identified barriers over the past 3 years, we recognize that there is still a lot of work ahead. We are committed to building on this momentum to create an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

Planned actions by priority areas

This 2025 to 2028 ESDC accessibility plan continues to focus on 8 priority areas identified through our consultations, aligned with 8 desired results and measurable actions to create a barrier-free ESDC. We will utilize performance data, aligning our measurable actions with the broader strategic goals.

We understand that accessibility is not just a legal obligation but also a vital catalyst for change. Accessibility is also crucial for ensuring equity, dignity, and full participation.

In 2024, 12,069 ESDC employees participated in the "Building a Barrier-Free Workplace" department-wide survey, which helped identify the barriers for this plan. Of those participants, 3,676 reported as having a disability.

To build on these insights, we consulted with over 800 employees, which included a survey conducted with the Employees with Disabilities Network. We also held focus group sessions with the Black Employee Network, Employee Pride Network, Visible Minorities Network, and Women's Network. These discussions helped us understand how the intersection of disability and other aspects of identity, including race and gender, can create and contribute toward additional barriers in the workplace.

We heard that participants face cultural expectations that discourage them from seeking accommodation, leading to increased stress and reluctance to voice their needs. Others expressed concerns that their disabilities, especially invisible ones, might be doubted by their supervisors.

We also heard about the fatigue some employees feel from having to repeatedly educate their managers about their accessibility needs. This added burden can be overwhelming for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds. Employees emphasized the need for a safe environment to disclose disabilities, especially for those facing historical discrimination. Many voiced that negative experiences impact their career advancement, highlighting how systemic barriers can limit job opportunities.

Our consultations also revealed that women with disabilities often juggle caregiving responsibilities while balancing the demands of work. Many live with a constant fear of disclosing their disabilities, worried about how it might impact their career growth.

We reviewed the accessibility of our services for clients with disabilities using data from the annual Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024. Among the 955 respondents who identified as having a disability, the overall satisfaction rate was 71%, while it was 84% for clients without disabilities. This represents a gap of 13 percentage points.

The Service Canada Client Experience Survey also revealed that 59% of clients with disabilities indicated that they faced at least 1 barrier affecting their access to service. Analysis of additional consultation data has identified other access barriers, such as:

- long wait times
- difficulties with applications
- challenges in resolving questions about their applications

We recognize that there is still work to be done to address these barriers, and your feedback on this plan is vital for our improvement.

Over the next 3 years, we intend to implement the following actions to remove identified barriers in our priority areas.

1) Employment

For the Employment priority area, we identified 9 barriers by consulting our employees with disabilities. To address these barriers, we aim to implement 18 measurable actions.

The employee lifecycle begins with **recruitment**, where a major barrier lies in the recruitment gap. Currently, the hiring of persons with disabilities does not reflect workforce availability. To address this, ESDC plans to continue recruitment efforts to align hiring rates with workforce availability.

Following recruitment, the focus shifts to the **self-identification process**, which often poses challenges for employees. To improve participation, the organization will revise the self-identification form to enhance both accessibility and privacy protection.

Next in the employee lifecycle is the **onboarding process**, which currently lacks adequate accessibility considerations. To facilitate a smoother transition for new hires with disabilities, the organization plans to update onboarding procedures to ensure that they receive essential information about available

accommodations before their starting date. This improved onboarding experience is expected to be implemented by 2028, focusing on multiple touchpoints to support employees effectively.

Once employees are integrated into our organization, **retention** becomes a crucial focus area. The department has historically witnessed a rate of employees with disabilities leaving that does not align with workforce availability. To enhance retention, ESDC intends to establish an internal departmental placement system and promote the use of exit surveys to gather insights into why employees' departures. The goal is to raise the two-year tenure rate for employees with disabilities from 70.5% to 71% to close the gap.

Navigating **access to accommodation** remains a key concern. As we heard in our consultations, many employees experience challenges during the accommodation process. ESDC aims to improve its intake and case management systems while simplifying access to necessary support services. Our target is to decrease the percentage of employees citing stress from accommodation issues from 15% to 3%.

Additionally, there is a need for **consistency in accommodations** across the organization. To address this, the department will implement the findings of the Better Accommodation Project (BAP), which involved 9 departments, including ESDC. The project was launched to improve how the government of Canada offers accommodations to employees with disabilities.

This project enabled a rigorous review of our own accommodation processes and identified key areas for improvement. It also produced 2 toolkits which we will implement within ESDC. We have developed a management action plan with milestones that will help keep us on track.

In line with the findings from the BAP, we will **adopt the Government of Canada's Workplace Digital Accessibility Passport** to foster open conversations about barriers and solutions between ESDC employees and their managers.

ESDC will also develop and implement **standardized guidelines and mandatory training for managers regarding Duty to Accommodate**. This initiative aims to achieve a 64% agreement rate among employees, so that they can pursue accommodation requests without fear of repercussions.

Career advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities are often limited, creating obstacles to growth. To improve this situation, ESDC will establish **mentoring programs and employ skills tagging** to help identify job opportunities aligned with employees' career goals. We will also offer training and leadership opportunities using an intersectional accessibility lens. This effort aims to increase the promotion rate of employees with disabilities from 4.1% to 8%.

Another critical area is **privacy concerns** regarding the handling of personal information related to the self-identification process. ESDC plans to enhance confidentiality measures in the accommodation process by ensuring the self-identification process is optional and protects employee privacy. Our goal is to reduce the percentage of employees expressing confidentiality concerns from 33% to 22%.

Finally, addressing **harassment and reporting issues** is essential for creating a safe environment for employees with disabilities. ESDC aims to reinforce protections against retaliation while fostering an inclusive culture through workshops and communication campaigns. The goal is to increase confidence in initiating formal complaints without fear of retaliation, rising from 49% to 64%.

By implementing these actions and tracking our progress, ESDC is committed to creating an equitable workplace for employees with disabilities, improving recruitment and retention, and ensuring alignment with the best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

2) Built environment

In response to insights gathered from persons with disabilities, we have identified 4 key barriers in the Built Environment priority area and established 4 measurable actions aimed at addressing these challenges.

The first barrier pertains to the **design of office spaces**. Key actions to enhance accessibility and inclusivity include modernizing our workplace in line with **ESDC/GC design standards** by 2028, educating employees on effectively utilizing these spaces, and piloting accessible furnishings in Service Canada Centres.

The second barrier involves aligning with **applicable building codes**. To ensure all ESDC spaces **meet accessibility standards**, we will establish a standardized verification process for new site designs by 2028 and collaborate with organizations like Accessibility Standards Canada to stay updated on evolving standards.

The third barrier focuses on the crucial need for **meaningful involvement of employees with disabilities** in decisions regarding their work environments. We will maintain ongoing consultations with the Employees with Disabilities Network and evaluate the effectiveness of design features in newly delivered spaces by 2028.

Lastly, addressing **inconsistent accessibility improvements** is vital. We will outline requirements to Public Services and Procurement Canada to ensure compliance with accessibility standards for future site selections by 2028.

Measuring our progress will involve monitoring the percentage of employees with disabilities who perceive the physical work environment as a source of stress, with a target reduction from 11% to 6% by 2028.

3) Information and communication technologies (ICT)

In the ICT priority area, we have identified 2 key barriers through consultations with persons with disabilities, leading to the development of 6 measurable actions aimed at increasing accessibility and inclusion.

The first barrier is **non-compliance with accessibility standards**. To address this, we will establish a **directive on IT accessibility conformance** by 2027, which will guide the implementation of the Treasury Board Secretariat's policies related to service, enterprise architecture, and digital accessibility within ESDC. Furthermore, we will document accessibility compliance reports for all commercial off-the-shelf products to identify gaps and offer barrier-free alternatives, with a target completion in 2027.

Additionally, we aim to integrate **accessibility requirements into the project management framework** and software development lifecycle guidebook by 2028, ensuring all projects include documented accessibility standards from the outset.

The second barrier involves a **lack of knowledge in creating accessible content**. To enhance employee skills in this area, we will implement a **mandatory self-paced training course titled "Introduction to Digital Accessibility"** by 2026, including the publication of IT accessibility guidelines and best practices. We will also conduct regular IT accessibility awareness programs by 2027 to help employees maintain accessible digital content.

To explore the potential of technology in improving accessibility, we plan to conduct a pilot program testing generative **artificial intelligence (AI) tools**, such as AI-powered screen readers and real-time captioning, and survey participants in 2027 to assess their impact on digital accessibility.

Through these strategic actions, we are committed to providing employees with disabilities with the tools and technologies they need to perform their jobs effectively, comply with accessibility standards, and contribute to a more inclusive digital environment at ESDC.

4) Communication, other than ICT

In the Communications priority area, we have identified 1 barrier related to **inaccessible communications for persons with disabilities**. To address this, we are implementing 2 measurable actions aimed at improving internal and external communication practices.

The first action focuses on enhancing **internal communication accessibility**. From 2025 to 2028, we will promote accessibility by sharing tips and best practices in corporate messages quarterly. This initiative will encourage a culture of accessibility by highlighting tools and success stories. We will also adopt an "accessibility by design" mindset, updating and creating document templates that prioritize accessibility. Feedback mechanisms will be integrated to allow employees to report accessibility issues in internal communications.

The second action aims to **enhance external communication practices**. We will ensure that materials are written in plain language and provide guidance for federal employees on using appropriate language when discussing disability. This work will also span from 2025 to 2028.

Through these initiatives, ESDC is committed to fostering clear and accessible communication practices. We will measure our progress using key performance indicators, including the percentage of Canadians with disabilities who agree that ESDC and Service Canada provide clear, inclusive communications.

5) Procurement of goods, services and facilities

In the procurement priority area, we have identified 2 key barriers for persons with disabilities and are implementing 2 measurable actions to address them.

The first barrier is the **lack of accessibility considerations in purchasing goods and services**. To address this, we will **track and monitor the percentage of accessibility in procurement contracts** and ensure that business owners are aware of the available resources to set accessibility requirements. In the 2023 to 2024 fiscal year, 69.23% of ESDC procurement contracts considered accessibility. Our goal is to increase this to 100% compliance by 2026.

The second barrier involves **delays in purchasing assistive and adaptive technology**. To improve this process, we will work with partners and leverage what they have done to create an **inventory of solutions and pre-approved vendor lists** for assistive technology, reducing administrative steps and

minimizing delays. We aim to establish a vendor list that covers at least 90% of known assistive technology needs by 2028.

Through these actions, ESDC seeks to enhance procurement practices to exceed minimum accessibility requirements and improve access for persons with disabilities.

6) Design and delivery of programs and services

In the programs and services priority area, we have identified 5 barriers impacting persons with disabilities and are committed to implementing 7 measurable actions to enhance accessibility.

The first barrier involves **challenges with the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) application form and online process**. To address this, we will modify the CPPD application form by **removing or simplifying complex questions** and organizing the form into clear sections with step-by-step guidance by 2027. We will also allow clients to describe their situations in their own words and provide clearer instructions on applying for benefits. Our aim will be to increase the percentage of CPPD clients who overall find it easy to apply.

The second barrier is related to **difficulties using the Service Canada website**. We will enhance usability and ensure the website is accessible by making sure the information is updated regularly and **written in plain language** suitable for a grade 8 reading level. We aim to ensure compliance with Accessibility Standards Canada by 2027. The goal is to improve client satisfaction regarding the ease of finding program information.

The third barrier concerns **accessibility in Service Canada Centres**. We plan to provide more **sensory-friendly spaces**, including private waiting areas for neurodiverse clients by 2028.

The fourth barrier relates to **Call Centres wait times**. We will introduce a **callback option and provide estimated wait times** to improve accessibility for our clients by 2028.

Lastly, we recognize that **employees lack understanding of the barriers faced by clients with disabilities**. We aim to raise employee awareness of these barriers by reinforcing engagement between departmental accessibility experts and service delivery staff. Additionally, we will update ESDC's AccessAbility Playbook by 2028.

Through these actions, ESDC is committed to creating a more accessible experience for clients with disabilities, ultimately improving their satisfaction with the design and delivery of our programs and services.

7) Workplace culture

In the workplace culture priority area, we have identified 5 barriers affecting persons with disabilities through consultations. To address these barriers, we are committed to implementing 9 measurable actions aimed at fostering an inclusive and respectful environment.

The first barrier is the **stigma, harassment, and biases faced by employees with disabilities**. To combat this, we will develop and implement an "**accessibility is everyone's business" awareness-raising plan** by 2026. This plan includes promoting disability inclusion, aligning with Accessibility Standards Canada, and providing annual events such as National Accessibility Week to raise

awareness. We will also provide equity-based training for hiring managers to ensure inclusive practices and evaluate the impact of learning events through employee surveys.

The second barrier involves the **need for increased engagement with employees with disabilities**. This year, we have established an Accessibility Advisory Group to provide recommendations from lived experience for future accessibility plans and initiatives. This group will help identify and address new barriers in the workplace.

The third barrier is a **lack of awareness regarding available resources and support**. We will expand our “Knock on Our Door” campaign to highlight confidential resources and ensure that all **accessibility tools are centralized on the ESDC intranet**, making them easily accessible by 2026.

The fourth barrier is the **need for updated training to promote a culture of inclusion**. We will review and redesign the “Richness of Diversity and Inclusion” training by 2026 to ensure all employees understand how to remove barriers and support their colleagues with disabilities.

We will **address accessibility concerns related to learning materials and the Learning Management System (LMS)**. We will develop **alternative training formats** to ensure accessibility for all employees by 2028 and monitor the LMS to address any existing accessibility issues.

Lastly, given the demand for service dogs, ESDC acknowledges the important role that volunteers play in helping to train them. Therefore, where operationally feasible, ESDC will support employees who volunteer to help **certify service dogs in training** in our workspace as part of our overall commitment to build a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

Through these strategic actions, ESDC aims to create a more inclusive workplace culture where employees with disabilities feel respected, valued, and supported. Progress will be tracked through key performance indicators focused on employee satisfaction and the effectiveness of implemented initiatives.

8) Data, research, and analysis

In the data, research, and analysis priority area, we identified 3 key barriers affecting persons with disabilities and we are committed to implementing 4 measurable actions to address them.

The first barrier is **insufficient accessibility and intersectional data sources**. To enhance data collection frameworks, we will gather insights from focus groups and conduct corporate barrier-free employee surveys on accessibility from 2025 to 2028. The **workplace survey results and data sets** will inform future ESDC accessibility plans and ensure evidence-based decisions are made to identify and remove barriers.

The second barrier involves **consultation fatigue and lack of transparency**. We will implement a **structured consultation framework by centralizing processes** with the Employees with Disabilities Network and other networks. This includes consolidating engagement efforts and providing clear updates on how their insights will be used, also spanning from 2025 to 2028.

The third barrier is the **lack of concrete action on feedback from persons with disabilities**. We plan to implement the **feedback management framework** identified in this plan that ensures public, and employee feedback received leads to real changes by 2028.

Through these actions, we aim to strengthen data-driven approaches to improve accessibility, facilitate informed decision-making, and foster an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities.

Our plan is ambitious, but at ESDC, we recognize that accessibility is not a checklist, it is a cultural shift. It needs strong support from leadership, strong performance measurement reporting, and real feedback from those who experience it.

Accountability builds trust, and we are committed not only to meeting requirements but also to setting an example for all public service in Canada. Our focus is not perfection but creating ongoing progress and momentum as we realize our vision.

At ESDC, we are committed to achieving the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*. We invite all ESDC employees, clients, and the broader disability community to share their input on our plan through the feedback process online form. Because accessibility is everyone's business. And inclusion is the foundation of our vision to be a leader in public service accessibility.

5. General

Alternate formats

This accessibility plan and our feedback process description are available by request in large print, print, braille, MP3 (audio), e-text and DAISY formats.

Online

Submit your request by ordering alternate formats online.

Email

edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Telephone

1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) (toll-free and video relay service)

1-800-926-9105 (toll-free teletypewriter)

Mail

Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service

Floor 3, Mail Drop 318

140 Promenade du Portage

Gatineau QC, K1A 0J9

Feedback process

As mandated by the *Accessible Canada Act*, ESDC established a feedback process through which public feedback on accessibility can be received.

Feedback from the public

Everyone in Canada is encouraged to share their feedback on our plans and progress reports using the feedback process, which also allows anonymous submissions.

Designated person to receive feedback

The Chief Client Experience Officer is responsible for receiving feedback from the public on the ESDC accessibility plans, the progress reports or any issue related to accessibility.

What feedback can you submit

You can submit feedback on our accessibility plans, our progress reports, or the barriers you experience while interacting with ESDC. We value your insights and encourage you to share your thoughts regarding our plan, so we can continue to improve and create a more inclusive experience for everyone. We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of our:

- services
- offices
- call centres
- websites

How we will use your feedback

We will use your feedback to improve accessibility at ESDC. We may address some feedback right away or use it to develop future accessibility plans or progress reports.

Confidentiality

Your feedback will not be associated with your name. We will share it only with those employees directly involved in improving accessibility at ESDC.

How to submit feedback

There are various ways you can submit your feedback. If you want to submit anonymous feedback, please use our online form and leave the contact information section blank.

The accessibility feedback received will be acknowledged in the same manner in which it was received unless it was received anonymously.

Online

Submit your feedback using our feedback process online form.

Email

edsc.accessible-accessible.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Telephone

1-866-506-6806 (toll-free and video relay service)

1-800-506-6803 (toll-free teletypewriter)

Mail

Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service

Floor 3, Mail Drop 318

140 Promenade du Portage

Gatineau QC, K1A 0J9

Feedback from employees of ESDC

As mandated by the *Accessible Canada Act*, ESDC implemented a feedback process that allows employees to share their thoughts on accessibility. This mechanism also permits anonymous submissions to ensure everyone feels comfortable providing feedback.

Designated person to receive feedback

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Services Branch, is responsible for receiving feedback from employees of ESDC.

What feedback can you submit

As employees of ESDC, you can submit your feedback on our plans, progress reports, or any issue related to accessibility at ESDC.

How to submit feedback

Employees can contact the ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) using the email address or online feedback form available on the ESDC/SC Intranet site, under the Human Resources Services Branch tab, which also allows employees to submit anonymous feedback.

Accessibility statement

ESDC is committed to promoting best practices in accessibility in all our policies, programs, services, and workplaces. Accessibility is a fundamental part of the client and employee experience. We are following the CAN/ASC EN 301 549 2024 standard, which includes WCAG 2.1 AA, and we are moving toward implementing WCAG 2.2 AA to ensure a more accessible ESDC.

We know it is important to produce information that is accessible to everyone. If you have any difficulties accessing this content, please send us your feedback through our feedback process online form.

6. Our department

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), which includes Service Canada and the Labour Program, administers the Employment Insurance Program on behalf of the Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC).

Our mission is to build a stronger and more inclusive Canada, to support Canadians in helping them live productive and rewarding lives and improving Canadians' quality of life.

ESDC delivers essential programs and services for Canadians through key life transitions. This includes helping seniors access retirement income, to assisting unemployed workers, supporting students and parents, and delivering benefits to persons with disabilities.

Service Canada is the main access point for many well-known programs, including:

- Employment Insurance (EI) on behalf of CEIC
- Old Age Security (OAS)
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD)
- CPP Children's Benefits
- Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Canada Child Benefit
- Temporary Foreign Worker Program
- Passport Program (on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada)
- Canada Disability Benefit and its supplement for children with disabilities, the Child Disability Benefit
- Canadian Dental Care Plan (on behalf of Health Canada)

We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of all Canadians by ensuring accessible, efficient, and high-quality service whether delivered in person, online, by phone, or by mail. As one of the largest employers in the federal public service, with over 40,000 employees, ESDC strives to create a diverse, respectful, and inclusive workplace where all employees can participate fully.

7. The Accessible Canada Act

The *Accessible Canada Act* was enacted in 2019 and aims to achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040. Under the *Act*, regulated organizations must identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than ICT
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation (does not apply to our plan currently)

The *Act* also requires organizations to publish an accessibility plan every 3 years and develop progress reports in between by consulting persons with disabilities. These reports must describe the actions the organization has taken to remove and prevent barriers using the accessibility feedback it has received from persons with disabilities.

8. Developing the ESDC accessibility plan

For the purposes of this plan, ESDC includes the CEIC.

Since ESDC prepared its last progress report, Statistics Canada released the results of the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). It shows that the percentage of persons with disabilities in Canada has increased from 2017 to 2022. The data shows that 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older, which is about 8.0 million people, had 1 or more disabilities that limited their daily activities. In comparison, 22% of Canadians, or 6.2 million people, reported having disabilities in 2017.

A significant part of the increase in the percentage of persons with disabilities comes from more mental health-related issues, particularly among young people (15 to 24 years old) and working-age adults (25 to 64 years old). In 2022, the percentage of individuals with mental health disabilities rose to 39%, compared to 33% in 2017. This context has informed the development of this plan and influenced our consultation strategy, which included targeted questions on mental health disabilities.

The ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) plays a key role in preparing, publishing, and monitoring the accessibility plan and progress reports, with direct input from employees, business leads, and partners.

The EAO has worked closely with the ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN) and other employee networks to raise awareness of ongoing barriers in the workplace and gather valuable insights. We used what we heard from these consultations to help shape this plan.

We also considered the following data sources to identify barriers:

- The 2024 Building a Barrier-Free corporate survey for all ESDC employees
- The 2024 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results for ESDC
- The Service Canada Client Experience (CX7) Survey 2023 to 2024 findings for our programs and service delivery
- The 2025 ESDC workforce demographic reports

We have matured our second accessibility plan, but our vision and desired results remain unchanged. It reflects our experience over the past 3 years in integrating lessons learned and implementing measurable actions to remove barriers.

ESDC vision

Our vision is to be a leader in public service accessibility, and we will lead by example.

We will eliminate barriers and maintain the changes required to prevent new ones from arising.

Our employees and clients with disabilities will be able to participate fully and equally in an inclusive, barrier-free environment. Everyone will be able to realize their potential and feel they belong.

Guiding principles

The following principles will guide the implementation of our 3-year plan (refer to Appendix A for the glossary).

- **Nothing without us**: we will listen to and involve persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of this plan. Their lived experiences are key for ensuring we base our plan on sound evidence.
- **Collaboration**: employees with disabilities, managers and senior leaders will work together and use different approaches to identify, remove and prevent barriers. We will use external sources of expertise as appropriate.
- **Responsive, proactive and results-driven**: we will prioritize activities that support accessibility by design and that will have the most meaningful impacts. We will make changes based on feedback, lessons learned, new standards, best practices and new regulations.
- **Evidence-based**: we will identify, remove and prevent barriers using data, research and ongoing monitoring.
- **Transparency and accountability**: we will encourage employees to adopt a growth mindset, establish clear roles and responsibilities, and openly report on our progress regularly in plain language.

Desired results

1. **Employment**: ESDC recruits and retains employees with disabilities, advances their careers, and provides timely access to workplace accommodations when barriers cannot be eliminated.
2. **Built environment**: persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to ESDC buildings, offices and facilities.
3. **Information and Communication Technologies**: existing and new information and communication technologies (ICT) products, services and content are accessible for all users.
4. **Communication, other than ICT**: ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language.
5. **Procurement of goods, services and facilities**: accessibility criteria are considered when buying goods, services and facilities, and products include accessibility features where appropriate.
6. **Design and delivery of programs and services**: in-person, phone and online client services are accessible for persons with disabilities.
7. **Workplace culture**: everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to make the department barrier-free for persons with disabilities.
8. **Data, research and analysis**: ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

9. Feedback received

In this section, we highlight that as a federally regulated organization, ESDC is committed to being transparent about the feedback we receive on accessibility through our feedback process mechanism. We will report annually on our plan detailing our progress and how we have considered this feedback.

By following up with those who provide feedback, we ensure their voices are heard and demonstrate how we have responded. This strengthens our commitment to accessibility and supports our goal of

continuous improvement. We encourage everyone to use the feedback process online form to let us know how we are doing.

From July 2024 to June 2025, our department received 79 pieces of feedback through 2 feedback process mechanisms that are in place:

- one for the public on our website, and
- a separate one for employees on our intranet page

We organized the feedback we received based on the 8 priority areas outlined in our accessibility plan. Each item was categorized by barrier type, with some identifying up to 3 types, leading to a total of 108 collected barriers.

All feedback was submitted through email, phone or online forms by the following groups:

- employees: 58%
- ESDC clients: 25%
- representatives of an organization: 3%
- members of the public: 14%

Feedback by priority area

Table 1: Feedback by priority area

ESDC accessibility plan priority areas	Feedback by barrier-types
1. Employment	23
2. Built environment	7
3. Information and communication technologies (ICT)	16
4. Communication, other than ICT	5
5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities	2
6. Design and delivery of programs and services	46
7. Workplace culture	6
8. Data, research and analysis	2
Other	1
Total feedback types	**108**

Feedback themes

- **Workplace accommodations**: in the employment priority area, there was a decrease in feedback from 64% last year to 48% this year. Despite this decline, feedback indicated that ongoing gaps in knowledge surrounding duty to accommodate, and the accommodation process contributes to confusion. Many employees stress the need for better awareness and training for managers about visible and invisible disabilities and the accommodations process to remove inconsistencies in the implementation of necessary accommodation for employees with disabilities.
- **Inaccessible office space**: in the built environment priority area, 40% of feedback addressed the urgent need for accessible workspaces, particularly regarding doors between staff areas that are difficult for employees with mobility disabilities to access.
- **Building accessible systems**: in the ICT priority area, 44% of the feedback focused on accessibility compliance issues.
- **Creating accessible content**: in the communications, other than ICT priority area, 100% of feedback emphasized the need for more inclusive content. Suggestions include using larger fonts, clearer colours, infographics, contrast captions, and plain language.
- **Client experience for persons with disabilities**: in the design and delivery of programs and services priority area, 54% of feedback reported barriers to their client experience.
    - **Phone services:** 30% of feedback reported phone communication was especially difficult due to hearing-related disabilities, autism, or mental health issues. Feedback received also described the current TTY service as ineffective, leaving clients without proper support. Instead, many clients suggest modern solutions like text messaging and live captioning.
    - **Online services:** 15% of feedback revealed issues with online services due to inaccessible communication methods.
    - **Service Canada Centres:** a key theme from our feedback relates to the challenges front-line employees face in supporting clients with disabilities due to limited communication tools and processes. Their feedback noted that hearing loss clients often experience dissatisfaction when communication barriers remain unresolved. They identified the need for live captioning and revealed that VRI service is limited to sign language users in face-to-face interactions and does not meet their needs when they must be referred to specialized Call Centres.
- **Building an inclusive workplace culture**: in the workplace culture priority area, 50% of feedback highlighted the need for mandatory training for managers on accommodations and raising awareness on invisible disabilities. By prioritizing comprehensive training, we promote an inclusive environment and better equipped managers to advocate for team members, fostering a culture of respect and understanding.

Implementing feedback

The ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) works with the Office for Client Satisfaction and the Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service to address feedback by:

- helping employees or clients with guidance, tools, or referrals to experts inside or outside the department
- working with employees or clients to gather more information
- sending feedback to the right branch or program, such as EI, CPP, OAS, or the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program, so they can fix the issues
- logging the barriers in our tracking system and using the feedback received to inform future accessibility plans and progress reports
- including feedback in our reports and advising senior management about any recurring issues

This year, we received 107 inquiries from ESDC clients, employees, and other government departments about accessibility. These were submitted via the feedback mechanism but did not provide actual feedback on barriers. Many requests were for reviews or assessments of websites, accessible products, applications, forms, and digital content to ensure they meet accessibility standards.

Employees want to confirm that their products work with screen readers and other assistive technologies. They have also asked about best practices for creating accessible documents, forms, and presentations, such as using alt text for images and organizing documents properly. In these cases, the EAO redirects inquiries to the IT Accessibility Office for expert help.

To manage accessibility-related feedback, ESDC introduced a draft Accessibility Feedback Management Framework in January 2025. This framework will improve our ability to collect, organize, analyze, and prioritize feedback from employees and the public. It will also help us track progress and take necessary actions (refer to Appendix B for more details).

10. Consultations

In this section, we explain how we consulted with our employees and clients with disabilities, as required by the *Act* and regulations. The findings helped us identify systematic barriers we need to address and improve accessibility.

We built on the results of our 2024 Building a Barrier-Free corporate survey, which received responses from 12,069 ESDC employees, a 30.88% response rate, including 3,676 employees with disabilities. This data is important for identifying the barriers we need to address for our employees, helping us achieve our strategic goal of closing the experience gap between persons with disabilities and those without.

This year, we expanded our consultation strategy and gathered insights from diverse ESDC employee networks representing persons with disabilities and those with intersecting identities, to better understand unique accessibility barriers.

During the consultations, employees and managers shared experiences and the impacts of those experiences through focus group sessions. The discussions revealed gaps in managers' knowledge about supporting employees with disabilities, which can limit everyone's potential.

We recognize the importance of these insights for making equity and inclusion core values in our department as we work to become barrier-free. We are committed to amplifying the voices of persons

with disabilities and prioritizing fair access for everyone while addressing the diverse needs of individuals with intersecting identities who face multiple challenges.

Consulting our employees

In the spirit of “Nothing Without Us”, the ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) consulted with more than 800 employees to gather their insights and lived experiences. This included 6 sessions with the Accessibility Advisory Group in both English and French, a survey to the Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN) that received 414 responses, and a National Call consultation with 166 EwDN members (for detailed insights, refer to Appendix C).

We also held 10 focus group sessions with 50 participants from various employee networks and conducted a survey among ESDC managers that gathered 221 responses. Lastly, the EAO met with 12 union representatives to gather insights from a diverse range of voices.

Accessibility Advisory Group

The EAO held monthly meetings with the Accessibility Advisory Group, which consists of 35 active members who are employees with disabilities. This group shared valuable perspectives and recommendations to remove barriers identified from the 2024 ESDC Building a Barrier-Free survey results (refer to Appendix C).

The Accessibility Advisory Group emphasized a stronger focus on the needs of persons with disabilities right from the start to prevent new barriers from arising. Some of the key issues reported included inconsistent support, barriers in getting promotions, and design challenges in our physical and digital spaces.

They also pointed out limited accountability from leaders and ongoing social stigma. The top 5 recommendations from the group included simplifying the DTA process to get support, designing accessible spaces, training managers about disabilities, increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in leadership roles, and holding leaders accountable for their commitments.

Where feasible, ESDC is dedicated to incorporating these suggestions into the measurable actions outlined in our priority areas, reflecting the voices of employees with disabilities to improve accessibility for everyone.

Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN)

For this plan, we consulted with members of the EwDN through a survey, focus group sessions for employees and managers, and National Call consultation to identify key findings (refer to Appendix C). The survey received 414 responses which revealed that 17% of respondents were not familiar with our accessibility plan, and 45% did not know about the progress report from December 2024.

Regarding workplace support, 30% felt there was no progress, and only 25% felt comfortable discussing their accessibility needs with supervisors. Participants highlighted the importance of the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential, EwDN for support, and Duty to Accommodate training for raising awareness.

During a National Call, we heard members ask for clearer accountability in the accommodation process, simpler procedures, critical management training, and clearly defined policies to empower employees.

Other Employee Networks

Engagement with diverse employee networks emphasized how intersecting identities create unique challenges for employees with disabilities in our organization. We held 6 focus group sessions with 50 participants with disabilities from various employee networks to determine key findings (refer to Appendix C), share insights and promote inclusion.

Participants from the Black Employee Network expressed that cultural pressures discourage them from seeking support and create a sense of distrust when disclosing disabilities. Those in the Employee Pride Network noted that people with both disabilities and 2SLGBTQIA+ identities face added stigma. Meanwhile, members of the Women's Network highlighted the difficulties faced when balancing work and caregiving responsibilities.

Participants from the Visible Minorities Network pointed out that being both a person of colour and having a disability adds extra challenges. Overall, there was a strong need for empathy, increased awareness, and support to enhance workplace experiences and address biases related to race, disability, and gender.

Participants also noted that previously identified barriers are becoming more urgent, including privacy concerns regarding sharing personal information, and the need for enhanced mental health support.

ESDC Manager's Survey

The ESDC manager's survey highlighted challenges for managers facing bias in the workplace, where 13% reported feeling stress from supporting others and 17% of respondents with disabilities struggle to meet their own accessibility needs.

The key findings (refer to Appendix C) also indicated a strong demand for improved training in disability awareness and more streamlined accommodation processes.

Union Representatives

Meetings with union representatives revealed 2 major barriers: fear of disclosure due to stigma and knowledge gaps among managers regarding available accommodation (refer to Appendix C). Recommendations include enhancing manager training on disabilities and streamlining the accommodation process.

Consulting our clients

Service Canada, which is part of ESDC, offers information, programs and services to Canadians in person, by phone, and online. We are collaborating with clients with disabilities, partners, and front-line staff to identify, remove and prevent barriers in the design and delivery of programs and services, with a focus on improving client satisfaction (refer to Appendix D for key findings and recommendations).

We used the following data sources to measure the accessibility of our programs and services:

- **Client experience survey**
  - In the Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, we asked 4,200 people about their experience using key programs. About 9% of the people surveyed said they had a disability.
  - We consulted 60 clients, 21 who were persons with disabilities, through a mix of 29 in-depth interviews and 6 online focus groups between October and December 2024, as part of the qualitative study.
- **Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) user experience testing:** we conducted usability testing from October 2024 to March 2025, gathering input from persons with disabilities about the application process.
- **Disability adjudication project:** we assessed the review and approval processes for disability benefits through workshops and interviews with 26 Canadians with disabilities from December 2023 to March 2024.

Participants shared several barriers impacting their experience with our services. Many expressed concerns about communication, highlighting issues such as confusing or inaccessible letters, complex phone menus, and limited support for clients with low digital literacy.

Long wait times to speak with Service Canada staff added stress, especially for those in challenging financial situations. Additionally, clients faced significant difficulties in completing applications for programs like Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) and Employment Insurance (EI) due to unclear online information and complex website navigation. Resolving issues was also a challenge, as clients often had trouble getting updates on their applications or answers to their questions while interacting with staff.

Clients with disabilities also reported lower satisfaction with their experiences compared to those without disabilities. Overall satisfaction across all programs was 71% for clients with disabilities versus 84% for all clients. In the EI program, satisfaction was 69% among clients with disabilities compared to 78% for their counterparts.

For the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), clients with disabilities reported a satisfaction rate of 74%, compared to 84% for clients without disabilities. Satisfaction with the in-person service was 72% for clients with disabilities versus 84% for clients without disabilities, while online satisfaction was 64% for clients with disabilities, compared to 73% for those without.

Notably, clients receiving Old Age Security (OAS/GIS) had a higher satisfaction rate of 84%, while those receiving Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) reported significantly lower satisfaction at 52%.

11. Priority areas as per section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act

In this section, we outline our detailed efforts to become a barrier-free organization by 2040. Last year's consultation findings helped us identify 31 barriers faced by persons with disabilities. In response, we

developed concrete solutions on how we plan to remove these barriers with 52 measurable actions over the next 3 years, turning insights into empowering change.

These outcome-based actions address the 8 priority areas, 6 of which are outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*, to help us achieve our vision and desired results. For each identified barrier, we provide measurable actions as broader improvements in our practices, processes, and business decisions, that aim to remove the barrier. The steps for implementing these actions, including timelines for the next 3 years, are detailed in our accessibility improvement activity tables in Appendix E.

Additionally, we use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of each action and monitor our progress in closing the experience gap between persons with disabilities and those without. This includes collecting baseline data, setting targets, and reporting actual performance.

Our focus is on realizing meaningful outcomes rather than just completing activities. By using evidence-based data, it will guide our decisions and actions as we strive for a more inclusive environment for everyone.

Employment

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that ESDC recruits and retains employees with disabilities, supports their career advancement, and provides timely access to workplace accommodations. We identified 9 barriers by consulting our employees with disabilities, and we plan to implement 16 measurable actions.

Barrier 1.1 Recruitment of persons with disabilities does not match workforce availability

Action 1.1.1 Focus on reducing the current recruitment gap by hiring employees with disabilities per our Workforce Availability (by 2026)

Table 2: Employment KPIs 1.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Annual number of employees with disabilities hired	275 (data as of April 1, 2024)	365 (gap as of January 2025)	397 (data as of April 1, 2025)	Workforce Availability

Short-term outcome 1.1.1 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Action 1.1.2 Ensure that ESDC's HR processes and protocols align with the recruitment and hiring standards established by Accessibility Standards Canada (by 2027)

Table 3: Employment KPIs 1.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Number of employees with disabilities who did not participate in an advertised staffing process for promotion due to concerns related to accessibility	TBD	TBD	Data for 2025 will be available by September 2026	2025 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey - Canada.ca

Short-term outcome 1.1.2 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Barrier 1.2 Concerns around privacy or a lack of information prevents individuals from self-identifying as a person with a disability

Action 1.2.1 Enhance the PeopleSoft self-identification process to ensure it is more accessible and user-friendly for all employees, aligned with the Accessibility Standards Canada Employment Standard (by 2026)

Table 4: Employment KPIs 1.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Total number of employees who self-identify as having a disability	1,652	2,839	3,717	Anti-Racism Indigenous Reconciliation Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility (ARIRDEIA) Team, PeopleSoft

Short-term outcome 1.2.1 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Barrier 1.3 Onboarding process of persons with disabilities needs to be inclusive and accessible

Action 1.3.1 Update the onboarding process for new employees with disabilities to ensure they receive clear information, including in the Letter of Offer, before their start date (by 2028)

Table 5: Employment KPIs 1.3.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Total number of employees who self-identify as having a disability	1,652	2,839	3,717	ARIRDEIA, PeopleSoft

Short-term outcome 1.3.1 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Barrier 1.4 Number of employees with disabilities leaving the department does not align with workforce availability

Action 1.4.1 Implement a departmental placement system for employees with disabilities who cannot perform their current main job functions due to barriers (by 2026)

Table 6: Employment KPIs 1.4.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who stay at ESDC for at least 2 years	70.5%	71%	TBD	PeopleSoft Human Resources (HR) system

Short-term outcome 1.4.1 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Action 1.4.2 Update and promote the use of exit surveys to collect feedback from employees with disabilities regarding their departure (by 2027)

Table 7: Employment KPIs 1.4.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who leave ESDC and complete an exit survey, with a focus on capturing accessibility, accommodation, and workplace culture issues	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Short-term outcome 1.4.2 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Action 1.4.3 Align the PeopleSoft process with the Employment Standard from Accessibility Standards Canada (by 2028)

Table 8: Employment KPIs 1.4.3

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who stay at ESDC for at least 2 years	70.5%	71%	75.2% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft Human Resources (HR) system

Short-term outcome 1.4.3 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Barrier 1.5 Difficulty in navigating the duty to accommodate (DTA) process causes confusion and delays in receiving necessary support

Action 1.5.1 Enhance the intake and case management system to improve the user experience for workplace accommodations (by 2027)

Table 9: Employment KPIs 1.5.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who state that accessibility or accommodation issues cause stress at work to a very large extent	15%	3%	19%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73P

Short-term outcome 1.5.1 Improved access to workplace accommodations

Action 1.5.2 Simplify access to the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential to help employees find information about the accommodation process (by 2026)

Table 10: Employment KPIs 1.5.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source

Percentage of employees with disabilities who state that accessibility or accommodation issues cause stress at work to a very large extent	15%	3%	19%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73P

Short-term outcome 1.5.2 Improved access to workplace accommodations

Action 1.5.3 Adopt the digital GC workplace accessibility passport and inform employees and managers about it, to promote open discussions about barriers (by 2026)

Table 11: Employment KPIs 1.5.3

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who state that accessibility or accommodation issues cause stress at work to a very large extent	15%	3%	19%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73P

Short-term outcome 1.5.3 Improved access to workplace accommodations

Action 1.5.4 Enhance IT accessibility services for persons with disabilities and define the IT requirements for a shared case management system for accommodation services (by 2027)

Table 12: Employment KPIs 1.5.4

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Client feedback survey on IT Accessibility Processes is complete and distributed to clients upon receipt of IT Accessibility Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	New survey

Short-term outcome 1.5.4 Employees with disabilities have the tools and technologies to perform their job

Action 1.5.5 Speed up the approval process for employees who need new adaptive technology for their DTA (by 2027)

Table 13: Employment KPIs 1.5.5

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Number of expedited processes approved by Operational Change Management Committee	1	6	1	Software Requests - Pillar Assessment Module

Short-term outcome 1.5.5 Employees with disabilities can access the tools and technologies they need to do their jobs more quickly

Barrier 1.6 Inconsistent application of accommodation practices makes it difficult for employees' ability to fully access the support they need

Action 1.6.1 Update tools and reference documents as needed to enhance the DTA process, in line with the guidance and tools provided by BAP, and provide managers with mandatory DTA training to improve overall experience for employees and managers (by 2028)

Table 14: Employment KPIs 1.6.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who agree that they can initiate a formal recourse process without fear of reprisal	49%	64%	42% (most positive answers)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 42
Number of managers who completed the DTA training as part of their delegation requirements	TBD	100%	N/A	Saba LMS reports; Workforce Analytics Data on Managers with delegation

Medium-term outcome 1.6.1 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Action 1.6.2 Develop an end-to-end DTA process and policy that provides clear guidance for managers and employees when responding to accommodation requests (by 2027)

Table 15: Employment KPIs 1.6.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who stay at ESDC for at least 2 years	70.5%	71%	75.2% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft Human Resources (HR) system
Percentage of employees with disabilities, who rate the physical work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 23%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73m

Medium-term outcome 1.6.2 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Barrier 1.7 Limited career advancement opportunities for persons with disabilities leads to lower job satisfaction and retention rates

Action 1.7.1 Enhance career development opportunities for employees with disabilities through mentorship, and by improving the learning management system to better match employees' skills with job opportunities (by 2027)

Table 16: Employment KPIs 1.7.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Annual promotion rate of persons with disabilities	4.1%	8%	6.6% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft HR system
Number of employees with disabilities who have completed the ESDC Group Mentoring for Aspiring Managers Program (GMAM) pilot who report that they	TBD	TBD	TBD	MS Form Exit Survey

agree/strongly agree that they feel confident in their career advancement potential following the pilot				

Note 1:

In addition to representation, retention and promotion indicators, the department will also look at hiring and departure patterns of employees with disabilities to compare them with those without disabilities. At ESDC, employees leaving the department are provided with an exit survey questionnaire to complete on a voluntary basis, and to help ESDC improve the workplace and our recruitment and retention practices.

Exit survey responses are anonymous and grouped with those of other respondents when reporting on the results. Individual responses and results for groups of fewer than 10 respondents will not be reported or shared.

All information provided in the exit survey questionnaire is treated in a confidential manner under the authority the *Federal Public Service Labour Relations Act* and the *Financial Administration Act*. Personal Information collected in the general information section is done in accordance with the *Privacy Act*, and other applicable legislation and will be used for research, policy, and/or evaluation purposes only.

Please note that all federal departments received the new workforce availability estimates from TBS as of early June 2025. The updated workforce availability is based on the 2021 Census and 2022 Canadian Survey of Disability (CSD).

Representation for Persons with Disabilities in Canada has increased significantly between the 2017 and 2022 surveys (from 22% to 27%). As a result of this increase, the workforce availability for persons with disabilities at ESDC has risen from 8.7% to 12.2%.

Short-term outcome 1.7.1 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Action 1.7.2 Provide career development support for employees with disabilities by offering training and leadership opportunities, using an intersectional accessibility lens to increase promotion rates (by 2026)

Table 17: Employment KPIs 1.7.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Annual promotion rate of persons with disabilities	4.1%	8%	6.8% (consult note 1)	PeopleSoft HR system

Short-term outcome 1.7.2 Improved recruitment, retention and promotion of employees with disabilities

Barrier 1.8 Privacy concerns prevent employees with disabilities from disclosing personal information

Action 1.8.1 Ensure the self-identification process is optional and protects privacy (by 2027)

Table 18: Employment KPIs 1.8.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of persons with a disability who had concerns about the formal complaint process due to confidentiality, how long it would take, etc.)	33%	22% (person without a disability)	33%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 62J

Short-term outcome 1.8.1 Improved access to workplace accommodations

Barrier 1.9 Ongoing harassment, discrimination, or microaggressions impacts employees' mental health, job performance, and overall sense of belonging

Action 1.9.1 Implement measures to protect employees with disabilities from reprisals, providing a safe and supportive work environment (by 2026)

Table 19: Employment KPIs 1.9.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who agree that they can initiate a formal recourse process without fear of reprisal	49%	64%	42% (most positive answers)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 42

Medium-term outcome 1.9.1 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Built environment

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that persons with disabilities have barrier-free access to all ESDC buildings, offices, and facilities. We identified 4 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 4 measurable actions.

Barrier 2.1 Design of office spaces may not fully accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities

Action 2.1.1 Implement ESDC/Government of Canada workplace design standards to enhance accessibility, inclusivity and employee well-being, and continue to pilot accessible furnishings in Service Canada Centres (by 2028)

Table 20: Built environment KPIs 2.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities, who rate the physical work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 23%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73m

Long-term outcome 2.1.1 Spaces occupied by ESDC meet applicable industry requirements for accessibility

Barrier 2.2 Existing building codes may not fully address the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities

Action 2.2.1 Establish a standardized floor plan design verification process for accessibility and align with Accessibility Standards Canada for ongoing improvements within ESDC spaces (by 2028)

Table 21: Built environment KPIs 2.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities, who rate the physical	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 23%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for

work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent				Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73m

Long-term outcome 2.2.1 Spaces occupied by ESDC meet applicable industry requirements for accessibility

Barrier 2.3 Lack of inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes regarding their work environment needs

Action 2.3.1 Maintain regular consultations with the EwDN and evaluate the effectiveness of accessibility design features in new spaces (by 2028)

Table 22: Built environment KPIs 2.3.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities, who rate the physical work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 23%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73m

Long-term outcome 2.3.1 Employees with disabilities are involved in the development of interior design principles

Barrier 2.4 Inconsistent accessibility improvements in physical work environment

Action 2.4.1 Communicate accessibility requirements to Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to ensure they are consistently integrated into new site selection processes (by 2028)

Table 23: Built environment KPIs 2.4.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source

Percentage of employees with disabilities, who rate the physical work environment as a source of stress to a very large extent	11%	6%	To a very large extent = 23%	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 73m

Long-term outcome 2.4.1 Spaces occupied by ESDC meet applicable industry requirements for accessibility

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure existing and new ICT products, services and content are accessible for all users. We identified 2 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 6 measurable actions.

Barrier 3.1 Non-compliance with IT accessibility standards can limit access to digital resources and tools

Action 3.1.1 Establish a Directive on IT Accessibility Conformance to implement the Treasury Board Secretariat Policy on Service and set clear departmental standards to meet IT accessibility requirements (by 2027)

Table 24: ICT KPIs 3.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Directive published	TBD	100%	TBD	SharePoint location for all IT Directives

Short-term outcome 3.1.1 ESDC internal IT solutions meet accessibility standards and requirements

Action 3.1.2 Publish accessibility compliance reports for all commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products, detailing accessibility features, compliance gaps and suggesting alternatives (by 2027)

Table 25: ICT KPIs 3.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source

Number of published Accessibility Compliance Reports	TBD	100%	TBD	TBD

Medium-term outcome 3.1.2 ESDC internal IT solutions meet accessibility standards and requirements

Action 3.1.3 Integrate accessibility requirements into the project management framework and consistently apply them to the software development lifecycle (SDLC) guidebook (by 2028)

Table 26: ICT KPIs 3.1.3

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of projects that include documented accessibility requirements and complete accessibility reviews in the SDLC Guidebook Application	TBD	90% of new and currently ongoing IT projects	TBD	SDLC Guidebook Application

Medium-term outcome 3.1.3 ESDC internal IT solutions meet accessibility standards and requirements

Barrier 3.2 Lack of employee knowledge in creating accessible digital content

Action 3.2.1 Implement a mandatory self-paced "Introduction to Digital Accessibility" training course for all employees to raise awareness (by 2027)

Table 27: ICT KPIs 3.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Number of employees who complete the "Introduction to Digital Accessibility" training in Saba	TBD	80% (as per TBS and mandatory courses)	TBD	Saba LMS reports

Short-term outcome 3.2.1 Employees will be better able to create and share content that everyone can use, helping improve communication, meet accessibility standards, and support coworkers with disabilities

Action 3.2.2 Develop and share detailed IT Accessibility Guidelines and best practices to help employees produce and maintain accessible digital content (by 2026)

Table 28: ICT KPIs 3.2.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Guidelines and Best Practices are published	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Short-term outcome 3.2.2 Employees will be better able to create and share content that everyone can use, helping improve communication, meet accessibility standards, and support coworkers with disabilities

Action 3.2.3 Conduct a pilot program to explore how generative AI tools can be used to improve IT accessibility (by 2027)

Table 29: ICT KPIs 3.2.3

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of pilot participants who report improved accessibility experience using Generative AI tools	TBD	80% of participants report a positive impact on their ability to access or interact with digital content by the end of the pilot phase	TBD	TBD

Short-term outcome 3.2.3 Employees with disabilities have better tools and technologies to perform their job

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that ESDC communications are accessible and written in plain language. We identified 1 barrier by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 2 measurable actions.

Barrier 4.1 Inaccessible communications due to complex language, fonts or formats that are hard to read

Action 4.1.1 Improve internal communications by sharing tips and best practices, encouraging an "accessibility by design" mindset through updated templates and tools (by 2028)

Table 30: Communication, other than ICT KPIs 4.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Medium-term outcome 4.1.1 ESDC internally shared content supports accessible communication practices

Action 4.1.2 Improve external accessible communications practices to ensure they are clear, accessible and written in plain language (by 2028)

Table 31: Communication, other than ICT KPIs 4.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of Canadians with disabilities who agree that ESDC/Service Canada provides clear and accessible communications	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Medium-term outcome 4.1.2 ESDC externally shared content supports accessible communication practices

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that accessibility criteria are considered when buying goods, services and facilities, and products include accessibility features where appropriate. We identified 2 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 2 measurable actions.

Barrier 5.1 Lack of accessibility considerations when buying goods and services

Action 5.1.1 Track and monitor accessibility in procurement contracts to measure progress in achieving accessible procurement practices (by 2026)

Table 32: Procurement KPIs 5.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source

Percentage of ESDC procurement contracts that considered accessibility	TBD	100%	50%	Manual review of 26 files

Medium-term outcome 5.1.1 ESDC procures goods and services that exceed minimum accessibility requirements

Barrier 5.2 Delays in purchasing assistive and adaptive technology and equipment

Action 5.2.1 Create or adopt pre-approved vendor lists to streamline the purchasing process for assistive and adaptive technology requirements (by 2028)

Table 33: Procurement KPIs 5.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Establish a pre-approved vendor list covering at least 90% of assistive technology needs	N/A	90% by 2028	N/A	The procurement tool established and the associated list of pre-approved vendors.

Medium-term outcome 5.2.1 ESDC procures goods and services that exceed minimum accessibility requirements

Design and delivery of programs and services

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that our in-person, phone and online client services are accessible for persons with disabilities. We identified 5 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 7 measurable actions.

Barrier 6.1 Challenges with the CPPD form and online application process

Action 6.1.1 Make the CPPD application form more accessible by removing or simplifying complex questions and by organizing the form with clear guidance (by 2027)

Table 34: Programs and services KPIs 6.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of CPPD clients who found it overall easy to apply	55%	TBD	53% (consult note 2)	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023

				to 2024, consult page 69 of the PDF

Note 2:

Since we don't have specific data sources to address the client service delivery barriers in the short term, we are using client satisfaction feedback from the CX7 Survey. This gauges how well clients with disabilities who were either approved or denied for benefits can access information about programs like EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS, and SIN.

Medium-term outcome 6.1.1 Clients with disabilities who access and receive services from ESDC are satisfied with their service experience

Action 6.1.2 Simplify the online CPPD process by conducting usability testing, while following Accessibility Standards Canada guidelines (by 2027)

Table 35: Programs and services KPIs 6.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of CPPD clients who agree that being able to complete steps online made the process easier	52% (as of 2021-2022)	TBD	53% (consult note 3)	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult page 69 of the PDF
Percentage of CPPD clients who are satisfied with the ease of completing the application form	53%	TBD	48% (consult note 3)	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult page 60 of the PDF

Note 3:

Since we don't have specific data sources to address the client service delivery barriers in the short term, we are using client satisfaction feedback from the CX7 Survey. This gauges how well clients with disabilities who were either approved or denied for benefits can access information about programs like EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS, and SIN.

Medium-term outcome 6.1.2 Clients with disabilities who access and receive services from ESDC are satisfied with their service experience

Barrier 6.2 Difficulty navigating the Service Canada website

Action 6.2.1 Improve the content on the Service Canada website to enhance usability and ensure it is accessible (by 2028)

Table 36: Programs and services KPIs 6.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with the overall quality of service of My Service Canada Account (MSCA) and eServiceCanada	MSCA: 68% eServiceCanada: 70%	MSCA: 70% eServiceCanada: 76%	MSCA: 73% eServiceCanada: 51%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult page 184 of the PDF
Percentage of EI/CPP/CPPD/ OAS/ Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)/Social Insurance Number (SIN) clients with disabilities who report that it was **easy to find information about the program** on the Government of Canada website	79%	63%	63%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult Tables Banner 3
Percentage of EI/CPP/CPPD/ OAS/GIS/SIN clients with disabilities who report it was **easy to understand information** about the program on the Government of Canada website	75%	76%	65%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult Tables Banner 3

Short-term outcome 6.2.1 All service channels are more accessible for clients with disabilities

Action 6.2.2 Improve the process to make it easier for persons with disabilities to find and understand information about programs and clearly show them the steps to apply for these programs (by 2028)

Table 37: Programs and services KPIs 6.2.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of EI/CPP/CPPD/ OAS/ Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)/Social Insurance Number (SIN) clients with disabilities who report that it was **easy to find information about the program** on the Government of Canada website	59%	79% (consult note 4)	63%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult Tables Banner 3
Percentage of EI, CPP/CPPD/ OAS/GIS/SIN clients with disabilities who report it was **easy to find out the steps to apply** on the Government of Canada website	54%	78% (consult note 4)	71%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult Tables Banner 3

Note 4:

Indicators used to report on the ease in understanding and finding information about selected programs such as EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS and SIN by clients with disabilities should be considered as proxies. Clients with disabilities are often affected by whether they are eligible to receive benefits from these programs. The CX7 Survey 2023 to 2024 finds that clients with disabilities are significantly less likely to agree that it was overall easy to apply to programs compared to clients without disabilities. At ESDC, we strive to narrow the gap between clients with disabilities and those without disabilities.

Short-term outcome 6.2.2 All service channels are more accessible for clients with disabilities

Barrier 6.3 Lack of accessibility in Service Canada Centres

Action 6.3.1 Increase the number of sensory-friendly spaces in Service Canada Centres to enhance accessibility for neurodiverse clients (by 2028)

Table 38: Programs and services KPIs 6.3.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Medium-term outcome 6.3.1 All service channels are more accessible for clients with disabilities

Barrier 6.4 Long Call Centres wait times

Action 6.4.1 Provide estimated wait times for clients along with a call-back option, and offer additional services for those who are hard of hearing to enhance accessibility (by 2028)

Table 39: Programs and services KPIs 6.4.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with the overall quality of service of the Specialized Call Centres and the 1 800 O-Canada general information phone line	Specialized Call Centres: 57% 1 800 O-Canada: 51%	Specialized Call Centres: 64% 1 800 O-Canada: 59%	Specialized Call Centres: 65% 1 800 O-Canada: 73%	Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, consult page 184 of the PDF

Medium-term outcome 6.4.1 All service channels are more accessible for clients with disabilities

Barrier 6.5 Limited employee understanding of barriers faced by persons with disabilities when attempting to access services

Action 6.5.1 Strengthen collaboration between accessibility experts and employees and update the AccessAbility Playbook to provide improved guidance on delivering accessible client services (by 2028)

Table 40: Programs and services KPIs 6.5.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with their service experience	69%	72% (consult note 5)	71%	% of clients with disabilities who are satisfied with their service experience

Note 5:

Since we don't have specific data sources to address the client service delivery barriers in the short term, we are using client satisfaction feedback from the CX7 Survey. This gauges how well clients with disabilities who were either approved or denied for benefits can access information about programs like EI, CPP, CPPD, OAS, GIS, and SIN.

Short-term outcome 6.5.1 Clients with disabilities who access and receive services from ESDC are satisfied with their service experience

Workplace culture

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that everyone at ESDC has the knowledge and skills to make the department barrier-free for persons with disabilities. We identified 5 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 9 measurable actions.

Barrier 7.1 Employees with disabilities still face stigma and bias in the workplace

Action 7.1.1 Promote and enhance awareness of accessibility and disability inclusion by addressing negative stereotypes and stigma through ongoing annual training and events (by 2028)

Table 41: Workplace culture KPIs 7.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who strongly agree that their department implements activities and practices that support a diverse workforce	41%	75%	34% (strongly agree)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada Question 48

Short-term outcome 7.1.1 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Action 7.1.2 Foster accountability at all levels of the organization, ensuring a shared commitment to advancing accessibility and inclusion (by 2026)

Table 42: Workplace culture KPIs 7.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who agree with the statement: "Overall, my department or agency treats me with respect"	79%	90%	72% (most positive)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? -

				Canada.ca Question 53

Short-term outcome 7.1.2 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Barrier 7.2 Need for better involvement and engagement with employees with disabilities to ensure their voices are heard and considered

Action 7.2.1 Consult the Accessibility Advisory Group each year to gather insights and recommendations from employees with disabilities about our plan based on their lived experiences (by 2028)

Table 43: Workplace culture KPIs 7.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who agree with the statement: "Overall, my department or agency treats me with respect"	79%	90%	72% (most positive)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 53

Short-term outcome 7.2.1 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Action 7.2.2 Consult the EwDN on a yearly basis to identify barriers and strengthen support for their initiatives, promoting accessibility and inclusion (by 2028)

Table 44: Workplace culture KPIs 7.2.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who agree with the statement: "Overall, my department or agency treats me with respect"	79%	90%	72% (most positive)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112.

				Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 53

Short-term outcome 7.2.2 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Barrier 7.3 Lack of awareness of available resources, tools, guidance, and support

Action 7.3.1 Expand ESDC's awareness campaign to showcase the confidential and unbiased resources available to support all employees (by 2027)

Table 45: Workplace culture KPIs 7.3.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees who report an increase in their level of knowledge related to systemic barriers after completing accessibility training	84.5%	86.5%	97% for fiscal years 2022 to 2023	Saba learning management system

Short-term outcome 7.3.1 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Action 7.3.2 Establish a centralized hub for accessibility resources that is easy to find and navigate, ensuring all employees have access to the support they need (by 2026)

Table 46: Workplace culture KPIs 7.3.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees who have the tools, technology and equipment they need to do their job	37% (Strongly agree)	46% (Person without a disability strongly agree)	37% (Strongly agree)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 1

Short-term outcome 7.3.2 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Barrier 7.4 Insufficient awareness of accessibility issues among employees hinders an inclusive environment

Action 7.4.1 Review, update, and redesign the mandatory "Richness of Diversity and Inclusion" training module to ensure all employees are informed and equipped to remove barriers in the workplace (by 2026)

Table 47: Workplace culture KPIs 7.4.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Increase in perceived knowledge related to Richness of Diversity and Inclusion after completing the training	TBD	TBD	8.11% increase in perceived knowledge for 2024-2025	Training Evaluation Dashboard

Short-term outcome 7.4.1 Enhanced employee understanding of systemic barriers faced by employees and clients with disabilities

Barrier 7.5 Lack of accessible training materials limit employees' ability to engage with and benefit from learning opportunities

Action 7.5.1 Develop and implement accessible training materials that include alternative formats (such as audio, visuals, and text captions) tested against WCAG 2.1 standards (by 2028)

Table 48: Workplace culture KPIs 7.5.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Increased number of accessible courses from Adapt Authoring Tool	TBD	TBD	TBD	Saba Learning Management System reports

Short-term outcome 7.5.1 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Action 7.5.2 Ensure that Saba, ESDC's learning management system, is consistently monitored and updated to address known accessibility issues (by 2028)

Table 49: Workplace culture KPIs 7.5.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees who reported they are satisfied with	TBD	TBD	TBD	EwDN Survey

the accessibility of eLearning training offered on Saba				

Short-term outcome 7.5.2 Persons with disabilities feel they are treated with respect by ESDC

Data, research and analysis

Our desired result for this priority area is to ensure that ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. We identified 3 barriers by consulting persons with disabilities, and we plan to implement 4 measurable actions.

Barrier 8.1 Lack of intersectional data sets to measure impacts in accessibility and disability inclusion

Action 8.1.1 Collect consultation data on intersecting factors such as race, gender, and disability inclusion to measure performance and report on impacts in removing barriers (by 2028)

Table 50: Data KPIs 8.1.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees who strongly agree that the department implements activities and practices that support a diverse workforce	34% (Strongly agree)	44% (Person without a disability strongly agree)	34% (Strongly agree)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada by Question 112. Are you a person with a disability? - Canada.ca Question 48

Short-term outcome 8.1.1 ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility

Action 8.1.2 Develop a structured data plan to enhance intersectional insights and analyze data sets from partners such as the Infinity Network and Statistics Canada (by 2026)

Table 51: Data KPIs 8.1.2

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source

Percentage of employees with disabilities who strongly agree that their department implements activities and practices that support a diverse workforce	34%	44% (person without a disability strongly agree)	34% (strongly agree)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada Question 48

Short-term outcome 8.1.2 ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility

Barrier 8.2 Consultation fatigue and lack of transparency

Action 8.2.1 Streamline the consultation process with EwDN and other employee networks by combining efforts and clearly reporting the findings with transparency (by 2028)

Table 52: Data KPIs 8.2.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Percentage of employees with disabilities who strongly agree that their department implements activities and practices that support a diverse workforce	34%	44% (person without a disability strongly agree)	34% (strongly agree)	2024 Public Service Employee Survey Results for Employment and Social Development Canada Question 48

Short-term outcome 8.2.1 ESDC makes evidence-based decisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility

Barrier 8.3 Lack of concrete action on feedback from persons with disabilities

Action 8.3.1 Implement the feedback management framework to ensure that we close the loop on feedback received on a yearly basis and take meaningful action (by 2028)

Table 53: Data KPIs 8.3.1

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actuals as of April 1, 2025	Data Source
Increase in reported barriers removed following successful completion of the feedback loop process for feedback received	TBD	TBD	TBD (Data to be collected in 2025)	Accessibility feedback framework data

through the established accessibility feedback mechanism				

Short-term outcome 8.3.1 Feedback Framework closed loop system increases the number of barriers removed across the department

Transportation

ESDC does not provide transportation services. However, we do realize that it's important to take an evergreen approach to checking if there are any accessibility issues that make it hard for employees to get to or move between our different work sites.

12. Accountability and governance

We established the Director General Working Group to support the ESDC accessibility plans and progress reports. The members of the working group are subject matter experts who are responsible for implementing the actions identified in the priority areas that align with their respective business lines. They oversee various aspects of accessibility at ESDC and play a leadership role in developing, implementing, and monitoring our accessibility plan.

The Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN) also plays an important role in shaping accessibility at ESDC. The Chair and Co-Chair of the EwDN serve as agents of change and fully participate in the Director General Working Group meetings.

Finally, the ESDC Portfolio Management Board, chaired by the Deputy Minister, is responsible for approving the ESDC accessibility plan and progress reports. Board members play a key role in ensuring accountability, stewardship, and transparency in our accessibility efforts.

Accountability is the foundation of trust. At ESDC, we are not only aiming to meet the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act*; we are leading by example for the whole federal public service.

13. Monitoring and reporting

The ESDC Accessibility Office (EAO) is committed to overseeing the implementation of this 2025 to 2028 ESDC accessibility plan and progress reports.

In 2023, we developed a performance measurement framework with outcome-based KPIs aligned with the Treasury Board Secretariat's Measuring Accessibility Strategy Results. This framework focuses on real tangible outcomes and helps us make strategic decisions based on data. It allows us to track progress and measure the impact of removing barriers in all priority areas.

To implement the plan, we will collaborate with persons with disabilities, partners, and governance committees. We will also refine our strategic approach to incorporate lessons learned, new research, best practices and reporting.

In accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act* and Regulations, we will publish an updated accessibility plan every 3 years. Progress reports will be published every year in between. The EAO will be responsible for monitoring progress on the implementation of the accessibility plan.

14. Conclusion

ESDC is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for everyone. Our 3-year accessibility plan sets the groundwork for improving accessibility in our policies, programs, services, and workplace.

We have seen strong momentum across the organization to remove and prevent barriers. While ESDC has made some progress in improving accessibility, we are committed to doing the necessary work needed to meet the needs of all employees and clients with disabilities. Consultations have shown us that making meaningful progress takes time, there are no quick fixes or one-size-fits-all solutions.

We are dedicated to learning, improving, and collaborating with persons with disabilities to ensure accessibility is a default consideration from the start. Our employees and clients expect action, not just within ESDC but across the Government of Canada. That's why we're working together to share ideas and best practices, enabling us to move forward more quickly, 1 example being our participation in the Better Accommodations Project.

This plan is more than just meeting requirements; it reflects our commitment to building a future that is not only accessible but also equitable. Our aim is not perfection but creating ongoing progress and momentum. The plan is:

- **evidenced-based** (data-driven measurable actions)
- **human-led** (built from the voices of those affected)
- **top-down endorsed and bottom-up built** (with leadership accountability and employee input)
- **intersectional and inclusive** (recognizing overlapping identities)
- **reported publicly** (ensuring transparency and trust)

We invite all ESDC employees and the broader disability community to share feedback on our plan. Because accessibility is everyone's business. And inclusion is the foundation of our vision to be a leader in public service accessibility.

Appendix A: Glossary

Accessibility

The degree to which a product, service, program or environment can be accessed or used by all. (Source: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada)

Accommodation

Any change in the working environment that allows a person with functional limitations in their abilities to do their job. Changes can include:

- adjustments to the physical workspace
- adaptations to the equipment or tools
- flexible work hours or job-sharing
- relocation of the workspace within the greater workplace
- the ability to work from home
- reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks for others
- time off for medical appointments

Accommodations (adjustments) can be temporary, periodic or long-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace. (Source: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada)

Ableism

Involves discrimination in favour of persons without disabilities. Ableism is linked to socially constructed views of "normalcy" that influence society's understanding of ability and disability. Ableism is also believing that people without disabilities are superior and that being non-disabled is preferable or ideal. Ableism may be intentional or unintentional. It promotes the view that persons with disabilities are less worthy of respect and consideration than persons without disabilities. It also communicates that persons with disabilities are less able to contribute and take part in society, and less valuable. Ableism prevents inclusion and limits opportunities for persons with disabilities. (Source: A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities)

Barrier

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of people with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological, attitudinal or based on information or communications. They can also be the result of a policy or practice. (Source: *Accessible Canada Act*)

Bias

A preconceived judgment that is held by a person and that influences their perception of or their behaviour towards another person or group of people. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Clients

People, businesses or their representatives served by, or using services provided by a government department. (Source: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada)

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety enables a person to feel respected and safe from discrimination, hostility and violence and to feel that their cultural identity, their needs and their rights are acknowledged and protected. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace This directive mandates that all public servants work at least 3 days per week in the workplace. To provide flexibility based on operational needs and varying job types, organizations can also require employees to be present for a minimum of 60% of their regular schedule on a weekly or monthly basis. (Source: Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace - Canada.ca)

Disability

A disability is any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. (Source: *Accessible Canada Act*)

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people that deprives them of or limits their access to opportunities and advantages that are available to other members of society. (Source: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada)

Equity

The principle of considering people's unique experiences and differing situations and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Inclusive workplace

An inclusive workplace is fair, equitable, supportive, welcoming, and respectful. It recognizes, values and leverages differences in identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences, and perspectives that support and reinforce Canada's evolving human rights framework. (Source: Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion)

Intersectionality

An analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identity (for example, sex, gender, age, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability) combine to create particular forms of discrimination and privilege. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Mental health

A person's psychological and emotional well-being, usually characterized by their ability to meet their own needs, pursue their interests, achieve their goals and cope with the various stressors of life. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Microaggression

A comment or action that is regarded as subtly expressing prejudice against a person or group of people. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Neurodiversity

Refers to how thought patterns and behavioural traits vary in humans. "Neurodivergent" can describe persons on the autism spectrum and anyone who experiences neurologically different patterns of thought or behaviour. "Neurotypical" individuals do not generally have autistic or other atypical neurological thought patterns or behaviours. Workplaces that optimize neurotypical tasks may not meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Neurotypical individuals may assume that their experience of the world is the only one or the only correct one. (Source: A way with words and images: guide for communicating with and about persons with disabilities)

Nothing Without Us

Refers to the principles of the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada. It means that persons with disabilities need to be fully and directly involved in decision making, in the design and implementation of policies, programs, and services. It should also inform how organizations approach accessibility plans and progress reports.

Self-identification

Providing employment equity information for statistical purposes. The federal public service uses this information to monitor the progress of employment equity groups and to report on workforce representation. (Source: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada)

Social model

In the social model, disability is a result of barriers that exist that lead to a discriminatory environment. The social model of disability provides a framework that focuses on abilities based on a humanistic view (i.e., focus on what accessibility supports (accommodation) persons with disabilities need for equal participation or effective functions such as a white cane, captioning, or ramp). In this model, "disability" is the result of the interaction between people living with disabilities and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers. (Source: 15. Annex A: Background and context (Informative) - Accessibility Standards Canada)

Systemic barrier

A barrier that results from seemingly neutral systems, practices, policies, traditions, or cultures, and that disadvantages certain individuals or groups of people. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Systematic discrimination

Discrimination is created and maintained by the seemingly neutral practices, policies, procedures and cultures of organizations and government structures. (Source: Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology)

Appendix B: Feedback management framework

The feedback management framework will be implemented as part of the 2025 to 2028 ESDC accessibility plan to help us organize and respond more effectively to the feedback we receive. This framework will focus on the following areas that will enhance our approach.

Collect feedback on accessibility barriers

- Collect feedback through multiple channels such as online forms, surveys, email, phone calls, and in-person meetings or service interactions.
- Ensure ease of access and user-friendliness for submitting feedback by adopting a “no wrong door” approach.
- Ensure feedback is shared with the responsible entities and promote the availability of accessibility feedback channels.
- Acknowledge receipt of feedback and privacy compliance in the format it was submitted, ensuring an option for anonymous feedback is available.

Organize feedback by priority area

- Designate a team responsible for managing and reviewing feedback.
- Categorize feedback based on priority areas outlined in the plan.
- Develop common procedures for organizing feedback.
- Apply retention periods based on requirements and organizational needs.

Analyze feedback for actionable insights

- Organize feedback data from various channels into a centralized system.
- Analyze measurable data and feedback trends to identify recurring issues, assess their frequency and prioritize areas of concern for resolution.
- Review qualitative and quantitative feedback to understand specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and gather insights for improvement.
- Utilize data analytics tools to gain insights from feedback data.

Prioritize actions, set targets, and monitor progress

- Allocate resources and identify responsibility for addressing feedback items and removing barriers.
- Implement a systematic approach to resolving feedback in a timely manner.
- Develop action plans to address identified accessibility barriers, incorporating feedback-driven actions into existing policies, processes, and practices.

Implement actions to address the feedback

- Establish a monitoring system through a centralized feedback system to track the progress of resolution efforts.

- Generate regular reports on feedback resolution.
- Develop and report on KPIs to assess the effectiveness of feedback management processes.
- Actively share accessibility feedback and performance data with stakeholders and partners to help them make informed decisions and implement necessary changes.

Communicate and report actions to close the loop

- Actively communicate accessibility feedback and performance through quarterly reporting on feedback and resolutions efforts with stakeholders and partners. This will help address progress made in overcoming barriers and identify ongoing gaps in accessibility.
- Ensure transparency in reporting by sharing feedback summaries and actions with employees, partners, and progress reports.

This framework provides a structured approach on how we manage feedback by creating a central source for feedback data. We will work with departmental partners to use this feedback to identify and remove barriers and develop new ideas for better accessibility.

To implement the framework, the EAO is partnering with the Chief Data Officer Branch and Privacy Data Management to set up a central repository for feedback.

- Phase 1 – Regulatory Requirements and Exploration (2025)
- Phase 2 – No Wrong Door Design (2025 to 2026)
- Phase 3 – Development and Usability Testing (2026 to 2027)
- Phase 4 – Implementation and Monitoring (2027 to 2028)

Appendix C: Employee consultations

Accessibility Advisory Group

The EAO met monthly with the Accessibility Advisory Group that included 35 active members from various areas of the department who are employees with disabilities.

The group provided valuable recommendations to remove the barriers identified in the priority areas, from the 2024 Building a Barrier-Free survey. Their insights and lived experiences informed potential actions that address the needs of persons with disabilities from the start, aiming to prevent new barriers from arising.

The group also confirmed that they continue to encounter several ongoing barriers.

- **Inconsistent accommodations**: there are unclear processes for getting accommodations.
- **Accessibility issues and career development**: barriers exist in hiring and promotion processes, and there is a need for more representation of persons with disabilities in leadership positions.
- **Design challenges**: both physical and digital spaces are not built with accessibility in mind.
- **Limited accountability**: leadership often does not respond quickly to accommodation requests.
- **Ongoing stigma**: there is still social bias and a lack of awareness about disability and inclusion.

Key recommendations

The Accessibility Advisory Group provided the following **top 5 recommendations** for business lead consideration, some of which were integrated in each priority area section.

- **Simplify accommodations**: create a “yes by default” system that makes it easy and fast to get accommodations. This system should protect privacy, limit the need for medical evidence, and avoid unnecessary hurdles for employees.
- **Design for accessibility from the start**: use universal design for buildings, websites, and services. Involve persons with disabilities in planning to prevent new barriers later.
- **Train and empower managers**: provide tools and training for managers to support accessibility with empathy, including disability awareness, effective communication, and understanding of the accommodation process.
- **Hire and promote persons with disabilities**: use fair and inclusive processes to increase representation of persons with disabilities in leadership positions. Value the lived experiences of employees and adapt to their needs. Reflect accommodations in performance agreements so employees are not penalized.
- **Hold leaders accountable**: set clear goals for accessibility and track progress. Ensure that leaders follow through on their commitments and that managers handle accommodation requests promptly.

ESDC will make every effort to integrate these suggestions into our plan’s measurable actions. We aim to listen to the voices of our employees with disabilities and work together to make significant improvements in creating an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.

The group also provided additional suggestions for improvements to consider over the next 3 years by priority area.

Employment

- **Proactive accommodations**: shift to a unified, timely, and transparent accommodation system that defaults to “yes” and protects privacy.
- **Inclusive hiring and advancement**: ensure accessible hiring, onboarding, and promotion processes that value diverse abilities and lived experience.
- **Empowered managers**: equip leaders with tools, training, and authority to support accessibility consistently and empathetically.
- **Representation and culture**: normalize accessibility conversations and increase leadership representation of persons with disabilities, especially from intersectional backgrounds.
- **Clear accountability**: establish measurable accessibility goals, centralized support, and safe mechanisms for resolving issues beyond formal complaints.

Built environment

- **Accessible by design**: apply universal design principles to all workspaces and include employees with disabilities in infrastructure decisions.
- **Remote work equity**: recognize remote work as a valid, accessible alternative and remove unnecessary in-office requirements.

- **Timely accommodations**: ensure consistent access to ergonomic assessments, adaptable equipment, and accessible facilities.
- **Consistent standards**: implement clear, empathetic policies that trust employees to define their needs and apply standards across all locations.
- **Health and geography**: address environmental health factors (e.g., noise, air quality) and ensure accessibility regardless of rural or urban location.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- **Built-in accessibility**: design digital tools to be accessible from the start, ensuring compatibility with assistive tech and diverse user needs.
- **Inclusive development**: involve persons with disabilities in consultations, testing, and policy-making to prevent digital barriers.
- **Accessible training and tools**: provide accessible IT training and expand access to AI and assistive technologies tailored to employee needs.
- **Streamlined equipment access**: simplify procurement and loan processes for accessible equipment, removing unnecessary security barriers.
- **Centralized digital support**: create a secure, centralized repository for DTA-related information, empowering employees to manage their own profiles and requests.

Communication, other than ICT

- **Meaningful engagement**: move from “checkbox consultations” to transparent, two-way communication that builds trust and shares outcomes.
- **Accessible internal messaging**: use internal channels to clearly communicate updates, training, and accessibility initiatives in inclusive formats.
- **Respectful self-identification**: support accommodations without requiring disclosure and avoid creating hierarchies between visible and invisible disabilities.
- **Inclusive culture**: train staff on inclusive communication and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities to reduce stigma and foster empathy.
- **Leadership accountability**: ensure leaders uphold accessibility standards and are accountable for inclusive communication throughout all projects.

Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

- **Dedicated support**: create coordinated teams with accessibility expertise to manage accommodation-related procurement.
- **Centralized funding**: establish a dedicated budget for specialized equipment and services to ensure timely and fair access.
- **Inclusive purchasing**: apply an accessibility lens to all procurement decisions to meet diverse employee needs proactively.
- **Employee-centred process**: remove the burden from individuals by streamlining and standardizing procurement procedures for accommodation-related procurement.
- **Equity by design**: plan for accessibility from the outset to avoid retrofitting and ensure consistent experiences across the department.

Design and delivery of programs and services

- **Inclusive design**: involve persons with disabilities in service design and evaluation to reflect real-world accessibility needs.
- **Flexible access**: offer remote, mobile, and appointment-based services to reduce delays and geographic barriers.
- **Culturally responsive services**: respect diverse identities, languages, and privacy needs, including ceremonial names and multilingual support.
- **Accessible environments**: improve physical service centres with quiet spaces, accessible signage, and assistive technologies like kiosks with audio guidance.
- **Empathy and accountability**: train staff in inclusive service delivery and hold leadership accountable for meeting accessibility standards and client feedback.

Workplace culture

- **Empathy and respect**: promote emotional intelligence and reduce stigma by supporting disabilities (invisible and visible) and mental health in everyday interactions.
- **Inclusive hiring and participation**: value lived experience by hiring persons with disabilities and using tools like accommodation passports to support mobility and continuity.
- **Training for change**: make accessibility and empathy-focused training mandatory, especially for managers and team leads.
- **Accountability in action**: hold leadership accountable for inclusive practices and adjust expectations when systemic barriers exist.
- **Empowered voices**: encourage self-advocacy, clarify accommodation processes, and consult employees with disabilities before implementing changes.

Data, research, and analysis

- **Measure what matters**: set clear benchmarks and track outcomes to evaluate the real-world impact of accessibility initiatives.
- **Transparency and follow-up**: share implementation plans and consultation results to build trust and demonstrate accountability.
- **Innovation with purpose**: create structures like an accessibility bureau to test and scale inclusive solutions.
- **Training and awareness**: embed accessibility, ableism, and stigma education into ongoing learning for all staff.
- **Oversight and accountability**: hold managers accountable for delays or denials in accommodations and promote awareness of available supports.

Transportation

- **Flexible access**: provide mobile and remote service options to reduce travel for clients in remote or underserved areas.
- **Specialized support**: implement appointment systems tailored to clients using specialized transportation.
- **Reduced burden**: minimize physical and financial strain on clients by prioritizing accessible service delivery methods.

Consultation questions

To develop these recommendations, we asked the Accessibility Advisory Group to discuss specific questions focused on areas where we identified gaps in perceived progress. The discussions covered several key themes.

Involving employees with disabilities

- In what area do you feel there is a lack of consultation?
- What can ESDC do better to demonstrate how accessibility feedback and insights are used to close the loop in addressing the feedback?
- What decisions were made where you felt they were not evidence-based?
- How can we find the balance between effective consultation / surveying to ensure co-development of the ESDC accessibility plan vs. the consultation fatigue that we often hear about?

9. Accommodation process

- Considering the known barriers related to accommodation and the DTA process, do you have recommendations on how best to remove these barriers, in the areas of:
  - policy and process
  - built environment
  - procurement
  - workplace culture
  - privacy and security
  - lived experience

What are the other areas where barriers exist, that may not be included in that list? Do you have recommendations for removing barriers in these areas?

10. Recruitment and retention

- Considering what we already know about barriers to recruitment of employees with disabilities:
  - Based on your last experience, what part of the recruitment process contributed to the barriers you faced?
  - What would be the proposed solution to eliminate the barriers you faced?
  - Based on your last experience, were there any positive elements you would recommend as good practices in the hiring process?

11. Career advancement

- Considering what we already know on barriers to retention and career advancement of employees with disabilities:
  - Based on what was already mentioned on retention of employees with disabilities, what actions should be taken to maintain successful employment?

- What action should be taken to better support you meeting your career goals, including career advancement?

12. Training

- Considering what we already know about barriers related to training:
  - Based on your experience, what are the factors contributing to the barriers experienced in learning?
  - How does this affect you in your current role or for career advancement?

13. Lack of awareness and empathy

- Considering what we already know on barriers around an accessible culture:
  - Based on your experience, has a lack of awareness on accessibility issues and empathy in the workplace affected your work and well-being, and if so, how?
  - Is there a particular area of awareness that you feel needs more attention?
  - How has a lack of awareness or understanding from colleagues or leadership affected your workplace, or your ability to do your job?
- How can your colleagues (colleagues, supervisor, manager, director, DG, etc.) better understand your reality when it comes to accessibility needs?
- In your opinion, what steps can be taken to improve awareness and empathy in the workplace to foster a more inclusive environment?

14. Impact of self-identification

- If you have self-identified, what influenced your decision to do so?
  - If you have not self-identified, what prevented you from disclosing?
  - What specific actions would make you feel more supported, valued and included at work?

15. Program and service delivery

- What are the top 2 barriers you have observed your clients facing when providing services to Canadians?
  - What do you wish you could do differently when providing services?
  - What could the department do to address / remove barriers for clients with disabilities?
  - What could help you and your team better serve persons with disabilities or clients-facing barriers to accessing programs and services?
- If you are not in a client-facing role, what are some (2-3) of the best practices you have benefited from when seeking services from other organizations? (i.e., shopping, banking, government service organization, etc.)?
- What makes your service experience an accessible service experience?

Employees with Disabilities Network

For this plan, we consulted EwDN using 3 methods: a survey sent to all members, focus groups for employees and managers, and a consultation with members during a National Call.

Key findings

Survey sent to the EwDN members

The survey, completed by 414 respondents, shared important findings about our ESDC accessibility plan and the progress we are making in the workplace.

- **Familiarity with the ESDC accessibility plan**: 17% of respondents were not familiar with our plan and 45% were unaware of the progress report published in December 2024. The highest levels of unfamiliarity were among employees who had been with ESDC for 3 to 10 years.
- **Progress in workplace accommodations**: when asked about the process for requesting workplace accommodation and any related challenges, 30% of respondents reported no progress had been made, while 23% were unsure about any progress.
- **Comfort in discussing needs**: only 25% of survey respondents felt comfortable discussing their accessibility needs with their supervisors.
- **Guidance on support**: 35% of respondents believed ESDC has made little progress in providing clear guidance on whom to approach for support, information, and training related to accessibility.

Participants from the EwDN all agree that the **3 top contributors** to a more accessible ESDC for employees with disabilities include the:

- Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP), which offers critical guidance on rights and accommodations
- Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN), an advocacy platform that fosters networking and support
- Duty to Accommodate (DTA) Training, which raises awareness of the DTA process, employer obligations, and employee rights

Consultation with the EwDN during a national call

During the virtual session open to all members of the EwDN at their National Call in July 2025, 166 participants provided these **top 4 findings**.

- **Accountability for DTA decision-makers**: it is important to have clear accountability in how decisions are made in the DTA process. A centralized approach can help reduce stigma and confusion about accommodations.
- **Streamlined accommodations**: simplifying and clarifying the accommodation process will build trust and prioritize employee needs while preventing conflicts of interest.
- **Essential management training**: comprehensive mandatory training on disability awareness and accommodation flexibility for managers is needed to support employees effectively and make compassionate decisions.

- **Clear policies and resources**: accommodation policies should be clearly defined and easily accessible to empower all employees and encourage open communication for a supportive workplace.

Focus groups for employees and managers

We held focus group sessions to create safe spaces for open and honest conversations. During the 4 virtual sessions, participants talked about accommodations, disabilities, recruitment, retention, career advancement, ICT, and workplace culture.

Both EwDN employees and managers shared their experiences of facing skepticism and bias when disclosing their disabilities, leading to feelings of distrust and worry. The following barriers are increasingly affecting employees and managers with disabilities.

- **Complicated accommodation processes**: the difficult process makes it harder for employees with disabilities and their managers. Frustrations come from inconsistent practices and too much paperwork, which discourages people from asking for help.
- **Need for better training**: there is a strong demand for better manager training and awareness about disabilities, especially invisible ones. This shows a lack of knowledge that can affect both personal and professional growth.
- **Safe environment**: both employees and managers stress the importance of a trusting and safe work environment. This helps encourage open conversations about disabilities and the support people need.

Survey questions and results

Are you a person with a disability? A person with a disability is a person with any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. (Source: *Accessible Canada Act*)

- Yes (76%)
- No (18%)
- Prefer not to answer (6%)

16. You indicated that you are a person with a disability. If you wish to provide further details, please select the box(es) that apply to you. (Mark all that apply)

    - A mental health disability affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social / compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness (17%)
    - Cognitive disability affects the ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication, and memory, including autism or Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities (17%)
    - Chronic health condition or pain affects the ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions (15%)

- A sensory or environmental disability affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities (10%)
- A mobility disability affects the ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting mobility (7%)
- Challenges with flexibility or dexterity affect the ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands (6%)
- Seeing disability affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight, and visual distortion (4%)
- A hearing disability affects the ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness, or acoustic distortion (6%)
- An intellectual disability affects the ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations (3%)
- A speech disability affects the ability to talk, including total speech loss, partial speech, and speech distortion (4%)
- Prefer not to specify (5%)
- Other (1%)

17. In total, how many years have you worked at ESDC?

- Less than 1 year of services in ESDC (6%)
- 1 year to 2 years of services in ESDC (9%)
- 3 to 10 years of services in ESDC (54%)
- 11 to 20 years of services in ESDC (20%)
- More than 20 years of services in ESDC (11%)

18. To what extent are you familiar with the ESDC accessibility plan?

- Not at all (17%)
- To a small extent (38%)
- To a moderate extent (30%)
- To a large extent (10%)
- To a very large extent (4%)
- Don’t know (1%)

19. To what extent are you familiar with the ESDC progress report published in December 2024?

- Not at all (45%)
- To a small extent (28%)
- To a moderate extent (20%)
- To a large extent (4%)
- To a very large extent (2%)
- Don’t know (1%)

20. Do you feel ESDC is more accessible than it was a year ago?

- Much less accessible (8%)
- Less accessible (10%)
- Unchanged (36%)

- More accessible (21%)
- Much more accessible (1%)
- Don’t know (24%)

21. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in the process of requesting workplace accommodations (i.e., challenges, delays, etc.)?
    - Not at all (30%)
    - To a small extent (23%)
    - To a moderate extent (17%)
    - To a large extent (7%)
    - To a very large extent (0%)
    - Don’t know (23%)
22. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in making the work environment accessible?
    - Not at all (22%)
    - To a small extent (28%)
    - To a moderate extent (15%)
    - To a large extent (3%)
    - To a very large extent (2%)
    - Don’t know (30%)
23. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in providing the necessary IT, software, products, and digital tools for your day-to-day work?
    - Not at all (9%)
    - To a small extent (23%)
    - To a moderate extent (26%)
    - To a large extent (17%)
    - To a very large extent (6%)
    - Don’t know (19%)
24. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in providing clear guidance on where to find or who to ask for support, information, or training on accessibility (i.e., accommodations, Ombuds Office, IT software, products, and digital tools)?
    - Not at all (19%)
    - To a small extent (35%)
    - To a moderate extent (23%)
    - To a large extent (10%)
    - To a very large extent (2%)
    - Don’t know (11%)
25. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in ensuring that communications are accessible and written in plain language?
    - Not at all (11%)
    - To a small extent (24%)

- To a moderate extent (26%)
- To a large extent (20%)
- To a very large extent (20%)
- Don't know (14%)

26. To what extent do you feel comfortable discussing your accessibility needs with your immediate supervisor or manager at ESDC?

    - Not at all (13%)
    - To a small extent (24%)
    - To a moderate extent (25%)
    - To a large extent (18%)
    - To a very large extent (18%)
    - Don't know (2%)

27. To what extent do you feel ESDC has made progress in ensuring you feel respected, treated fairly, and valued by your colleagues and your immediate supervisor or manager?

    - Not at all (18%)
    - To a small extent (26%)
    - To a moderate extent (21%)
    - To a large extent (17%)
    - To a very large extent (8%)
    - Don't know (10%)

28. Is there a specific event, activity, policy, program, process, system (or other) that you have experienced, or that you know of, that you feel is positively contributing to a more accessible ESDC for employees and/or clients with disabilities?

    - Yes (73%)
    - No (27%)

29. Please share it in your own words – Top 3 key themes

    - Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP): highly recognized for providing effective guidance and support related to accessibility issues, helping employees understand their rights and navigate accommodations. Recognized for offering valuable guidance, although noted as under-resourced.
    - Employees with Disabilities Network (EwDN): an important platform for advocacy and support, allowing employees to connect and share their experiences in creating a more inclusive environment.
    - Duty to Accommodate Training: training geared toward employees about duty to accommodate, which helps ensure that the legal requirements are understood and implemented effectively.

30. Is there a specific event, activity, policy, program, process, system (or other) that you have experienced, or that you know of, that you feel is creating barriers to accessibility for ESDC's employees and/or clients with disabilities?

- Yes (45%)
- No (55%)

31. Please share it in your own words – Top 3 barriers to accessibility

- Inconsistent Duty to Accommodate (DTA) Processes: significant issues with standardization creating confusion and delays in obtaining necessary accommodations.
- Lack of understanding about DTA: a prevalent lack of understanding about the DTA process among managers may lead to challenging outcomes and denial of requests.
- Cultural stigma and fear and disclosure: employees face stigma when disclosing disabilities, resulting in a culture of silence that deters employees from pursuing accommodations.

National call questions

- Do you feel there has been noticeable improvement in accommodations over the past year at ESDC (e.g., the accommodations process; the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential; the accommodations module in PeopleSoft; other)?
- Do you feel there has been noticeable improvement in employment over the past year at ESDC (e.g., application, interview process, recruitment, onboarding, reintegrating into work after sick leave, training and career advancement opportunities; other)?
- Do you feel there has been noticeable improvement in workplace culture over the past year at ESDC (e.g., stigma, harassment, discrimination, ableism, corporate or team communications, training and guidance on accessibility and workplace accommodations, awareness raising, training and learning, opportunities to provide accessibility-related feedback, or others)?
- Do you feel there has been noticeable improvement in technology, including corporate systems, over the past year at ESDC (e.g., ESDC intranet; PeopleSoft; Saba; other systems that you use regularly in your job; other)?
- Our team is aware of some main barriers to accessibility at ESDC such as:
  - accommodation delays
  - accommodations related to return to office (RTO)
  - lack of awareness and training on duty to accommodate (DTA) and accessibility
  - Information Communication Technology (ICT) products, services, and content (including accessible documents, meetings, or software)

  With that in mind, have you noticed any new barriers in our organization over the past year? If so, what are they?
- In your view, what is 1 key action ESDC should prioritize in its 2025 to 2028 accessibility plan to drive meaningful and lasting change?

Other Networks

Collecting data on intersecting identities is key to understanding employees with disabilities in our organization. Our goal is to build on lessons and insights from last year's consultations.

We held 6 focus group sessions with employees with disabilities who are members of different employee networks to gather insights, showcase diverse voices, and promote inclusion. From 50 participants, we learned about our progress and how barriers affect job satisfaction and career growth. We also added questions to explore the challenges faced by equity-deserving groups.

The findings show how different aspects of a person's identity overlap and create unique barriers. This understanding shows how various forms of discrimination can combine, and how this impacts individuals.

Key Findings

Black Employee Network

- **Cultural pressures**: participants feel discouraged from seeking accommodation, leading to increased stress and a culture of silence.
- **Doubt about disabilities**: black employees with invisible disabilities often face additional doubt from managers due to intersecting identities.
- **Fatigue from educating others**: marginalized individuals are tired from having to explain to colleagues about their unique challenges.
- **Trust and sharing**: historical discrimination makes black women worried about the negative effects of sharing personal information.
- **Barriers to advancement**: unfair views about who deserves a promotion are made worse by racism, sexism, and discrimination against disabilities.

Employee Pride Network

- **Gaining recognition**: participants noted that those with invisible disabilities face more challenges in gaining recognition and support.
- **Discrimination**: participants with both disabilities and 2SLGBTQIA+ identities experience compounded stigma and discrimination in the workplace.
- **Manager support**: strong relationships with managers are crucial for creating an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their accommodation needs.
- **Systemic biases**: many participants reported experiencing systemic ableism and microaggressions, showing how biases against disabilities overlap with other forms of discrimination.
- **Support systems in mental health**: biases against disabilities and other forms of discrimination can negatively impact mental health and job satisfaction. Strong mentorship and advocacy networks within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community provide important help, boosting resilience and overall well-being.

Women's Network

- **Navigating accommodations**: women with disabilities often manage a dual role of work and caregiving, making it hard for them to seek accommodations.
- **Fear of disclosure**: many worry that disclosing their disabilities could hurt their chances for career advancement, especially due to gender-based stereotypes.

- **Stigmatization and alienation**: those with invisible disabilities often feel like they have to explain their conditions over and over again. This can be frustrating and make them feel excluded in a workplace that doesn't understand how gender and disability relate to each other.
- **Inconsistent manager support**: support from managers varies; some understand the connection between different identities, while others overlook critical issues like menopause and don't meet accommodation needs effectively.
- **Inclusive support systems**: there is a need for support systems that address the unique challenges faced by women with disabilities. Considering their overlapping identities and responsibilities can help empower them to effectively advocate for their needs.

Visible Minorities Network

- **Race and disability**: participants noted that being both a person of colour and having a disability creates extra barriers in the workplace.
- **Self-advocacy difficulties**: some employees feel unprepared to advocate for themselves because cultural barriers make it hard to express their needs, showing a need for support that respects their diverse backgrounds.
- **Inconsistent manager awareness**: managers have different levels of awareness, which leads to varied experiences for employees. It's important for them to understand how overlapping identities impact individuals.
- **Need for empathetic management**: employees stressed the importance of empathy, supportive interactions, good listening and thoughtful responses to improve their work experiences.
- **Addressing biases**: raising cultural awareness on biases related to race and disability is essential to understand how different forms of discrimination impact their experiences.

Key emerging barriers for the EwDN and employee networks

Participants from the EwDN and other employee networks stated that previously identified barriers have become more specific and urgent. They emphasized the need for changes within our department to enhance support for employees with disabilities.

- **Concerns about onsite policy:** many are worried that being onsite 3 days a week could negatively affect their performance and limit the accommodations support they receive. This can increase stress and anxiety from their current health issues along with their work responsibilities.
- **Privacy issues**: frustrations are heightened about having to share personal information repeatedly without guarantees that their data is safe, leading to feelings of distrust.
- **Caregiving responsibilities**: many employees are balancing work and caregiving duties and need supportive policies to help manage these challenges.
- **Mental health support**: managing many tasks without enough support impacts employees' well-being and increases mental health barriers.

Additional engagement

This year, the EAO has engaged with Indigenous groups to better understand the challenges faced by Indigenous employees with disabilities. Our discussions included representatives from the Indigenous Employees' Circle and teams focused on indigenous recruitment, retention, advancement, and engagement.

The following reports identify barriers, many of which align with the insights from the Employee Network focus groups.

- The Indigenous Federal Employees with Disabilities (IFED) survey report highlights that:
  - 39% felt limited in career advancement due to disability
  - 37% faced delays in receiving necessary accommodations
  - 59% lacked access to training, mentorship, and career growth
  - 69% cited a need for culturally sensitive accommodations
- The Many Voices, One Mind: A Pathway to Reconciliation report emphasizes the need to address bias, racism, discrimination, and harassment in the Public Service, and to improve cultural competence and career development.

We are committed to understanding Indigenous perspectives and supporting ESDC's reconciliation efforts and will seek further opportunities to learn and engage.

Focus group questions

The context and questions were specifically tailored for each group to explore intersectionality. However, for the EwDN focus groups, we used the same questions without an intersectional focus. In this appendix, you will find the questions used for the Women's Network.

Accommodations

Did you discuss your accommodation needs with your manager?

32. Did you feel that your manager understood the barriers you face due to your disability or disabilities and other aspects of your identity?
33. Did you submit your accommodations request through Peoplesoft?
34. For those who submitted their accommodations request through Peoplesoft, was the process clear and easy to follow?
35. Did you and your manager have a dedicated conversation about your accommodation needs?
36. Were temporary accommodations provided in a timely manner?
37. Did your manager support your request?
38. If your request was approved, do you feel you have received your accommodations in a timely manner, considering it might come in stages?
39. While waiting, did you receive regular updates on the status of your request?
40. Did your manager know how to obtain the necessary arrangements, tools or equipment?
41. Looking back on your experiences with accommodations:
    - What has been the most significant challenge you faced and what are your recommendations to address the barriers?
    - If something worked well for you, how did it make a difference?

Disclosing disability

For those who have shared their disability, what was your experience like?

42. For those who chose not to disclose (regardless of whether it was through PeopleSoft or not), what concerns or barriers influenced your decision?

43. What would make it easier for women to feel safe and supported in sharing their disabilities with their supervisor or manager at ESDC?

Recruitment, retention and career advancement

Have you faced any barriers during your career journey (i.e., application, interview process, being recruited, onboarding journey, reintegrating into work after sick leave, accessing training or career advancement opportunities)? If yes, in 1 sentence, what has been your biggest barrier in your journey within ESDC?

44. What is 1 action ESDC can take to prioritize accessibility and improve employee retention (i.e., hiring practices, workplace support, fair advancement opportunities, timely workplace accommodations, etc.)?

Information, communications and technology

When you need information about accessible tools, services, or content (including accessible documents, meetings, or software), do you know where to find them?

45. Think about the same context:
    - Do you think your colleagues know where to find them?
    - Do you think your manager knows where to find them?
46. From your experience do you find ESDC's tools, services or content (including accessible documents, meetings, or software) easy or challenging to use or both? Can you please share your experience?
47. What is the one change you would like to see at ESDC to make the user experience accessible for everyone?

Workplace culture

How do you perceive that your colleagues and leadership understand and acknowledge the ways disability intersects with other aspects of your identity?

48. What would you like to see from your colleagues and leadership to improve your mental health?
49. Imagine it’s 5 years from now. What do you want the headline to say about the progress ESDC has made in accessibility and its impact on women with disabilities?

ESDC manager’s survey

This year, we conducted a survey with managers and employees in supervisory roles, including team leads, while excluding EX-level positions. We wanted to engage both managers with and without disabilities to better understand the barriers they face and seek their perspectives on the progress made in improving accessibility at ESDC.

Key findings

- **Managers with disabilities:** 27% of managers who responded have a disability, mainly cognitive disabilities, chronic health conditions, and mental health.
    - 63% have been supervisors for 3 to 10 years, and 56% have managed employees with disabilities in the last 2 years.

- 17% struggle to meet their own accessibility needs.
- 15% deal with bias and stigma in the workplace.
- Managers rely on the CoE OEP for guidance but report inconsistent response times.

- **Perceptions on training for employees in a supervisory role to support employees with disabilities**
  - 11% recommend training in disability awareness (visible and invisible) and DTA.
  - 10% recommend training in accessible communication.
  - 15% suggest there is a lack of training on accessibility.
  - 13% believe supervisors struggle to apply accessible practices effectively in a hybrid setting.
- **Process improvements**
  - 16% think a simpler accommodation process would help.
  - 15% want a central resource location.
- **DTA challenges**
  - 18% find the DTA process unclear.
  - 16% struggle to find necessary support.
  - 15% feel unsure of where to start.
- **Supporting employees**
  - 19% face challenges in finding workable accommodations.
  - 17% have trouble navigating human resource or accommodation policies.
  - 14% have difficulty locating tools and resources.
  - 13% feel stress from supporting others.

Survey questions and findings

Are you a person with a disability?

- Yes (27%)
- No (70%)
- Prefer not to answer (3%)

50. You indicated that you are a person with a disability. If you wish to provide further details, please select the box(es) that apply to you. (Mark all that apply)
    - A mental health disability affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social / compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness (18%)
    - Cognitive disability affects the ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication, and memory, including autism or Asperger’s syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities (22%)
    - A chronic health condition or pain affects the ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions (20%)

- A sensory or environmental disability affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities (15%)
- A mobility disability affects the ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting mobility (5%)
- Challenges with flexibility or dexterity affect the ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands (2%)
- Seeing disability affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight, and visual distortion (5%)
- A hearing disability affects the ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness, or acoustic distortion (8%)
- An intellectual disability affects the ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations (0%)
- A speech disability affects the ability to talk, including total speech loss, partial speech, and speech distortion (1%)
- Prefer not to specify (1%)
- Another disability (3%)

51. In total, how many years have you been in a supervisory role (e.g., team lead, manager, supervisor) at ESDC excluding any time spent in an EX-level position?

    - Less than 1 year of services in ESDC (8%)
    - 1 year to 2 years of services in ESDC (15%)
    - 3 to 10 years of services in ESDC (63%)
    - 11 to 20 years of services in ESDC (11%)
    - More than 20 years of services in ESDC (3%)

52. How familiar are you with the ESDC accessibility plan?

    - Not at all (7%)
    - To a small extent (38%)
    - To a moderate extent (42%)
    - To a large extent (10%)
    - To a very large extent (3%)
    - Don’t know (0%)

53. How familiar are you with the ESDC progress report published in December 2024?

    - Not at all (41%)
    - To a small extent (36%)
    - To a moderate extent (17%)
    - To a large extent (3%)
    - To a very large extent (3%)
    - Don’t know (0%)

54. In your opinion, is ESDC more accessible today than it was a year ago?

    - Much less accessible (0%)
    - Less accessible (2%)

- Unchanged (34%)
- More accessible (33%)
- Much more accessible (4%)
- Don't know (27%)

55. Have you managed an employee with a disability in your team in the last 2 years?

- Yes (56%)
- No (40%)
- Not sure (4%)

56. How confident do you feel about managing employees with visible or invisible disabilities (e.g., discussing, accommodations, understanding needs, building an inclusive team)?

- Not at all (1%)
- To a small extent (11%)
- To a moderate extent (35%)
- To a large extent (36%)
- To a very large extent (17%)
- Don't know (0%)

57. How comfortable do you think employees on your team feel sharing information about their disabilities with you?

- Not at all (0%)
- To a small extent (5%)
- To a moderate extent (25%)
- To a large extent (43%)
- To a very large extent (23%)
- Don't know (4%)

58. How aware are you of the Duty to Accommodate (DTA) process and your role in it?

- Not at all (0%)
- To a small extent (4%)
- To a moderate extent (22%)
- To a large extent (38%)
- To a very large extent (36%)
- Don't know (0%)

59. How easy do you find the DTA process to follow?

- Not applicable (4%)
- Not at all (8%)
- To a small extent (24%)
- To a moderate extent (41%)
- To a large extent (16%)
- To a very large extent (7%)
- Don't know (0%)

60. How much support do you receive when navigating the DTA process?
    - Not applicable (10%)
    - Not at all (7%)
    - To a small extent (24%)
    - To a moderate extent (32%)
    - To a large extent (17%)
    - To a very large extent (7%)
    - Don't know (3%)
61. Who has supported you in navigating the DTA process, and in what have they helped (i.e., Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP), your supervisor, etc.)? Top 3 most frequently cited support themes:
    - Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP)
    - Managers and supervisors
    - Branch Management Services (BMS) and Human Resources Teams
62. What has been your biggest challenge or barrier when supporting employees through the DTA process? (Mark all that apply)
    - Costs or budget are a concern (6%)
    - Hard to find the right tools or support (16%)
    - Haven't faced any challenges or barriers (6%)
    - Not enough awareness or guidance (12%)
    - Not enough time (10%)
    - Not sure what to do or how to start (15%)
    - The process is not clear (18%)
    - Unsure about how to have conversations about accommodations needs (7%)
    - Other - Top 3 themes (10%)
        - Difficulties with Peoplesoft Navigation – Respondents experienced major difficulties using PeopleSoft to request accommodations, including deleting old accommodations and confusion about how to manage requests. Many found the system hard to use.
        - Unclear and Inconsistent Approval Processes – Many respondents were confused about how the approval process worked. They were unsure about who needed to approve requests, leading to inconsistent decisions across ESDC.
        - Long response times and support concerns – Respondents mentioned long wait times for support and guidance from the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential (CoE OEP) and Human Resources. These delays in getting important information made it harder for employees and managers to navigate the accommodation process. As a result, many felt unsupported, which created more barriers to getting the accommodations they needed.
63. To what extent are you aware of accessible practices at ESDC (i.e., accessible documents, meetings, etc.)?

- Not at all (2%)
- To a small extent (28%)
- To a moderate extent (46%)
- To a large extent (18%)
- To a very large extent (6%)
- Don't know (0%)

64. What are the main challenges or barriers in making your work environments accessible? (Mark all that apply)

- Hard to apply accessible practices in a hybrid work environment (13%)
- Hard to find or access the right tools or technology (11%)
- Haven't faced any challenges and barriers (5%)
- Not enough budget and resources (8%)
- Not enough knowledge or training (15%)
- Not enough time (12%)
- Not sure (3%)
- Resistance to change or lack of support from colleagues (4%)
- Resistance to change or lack of support from employees (7%)
- Resistance to change or lack of support from senior management (9%)
- Unclear steps to take or where to start (11%)
- Other - Top theme (2%)
    - Mandatory accessibility and accountability for senior leadership – There is a strong call that accessibility should be a mandatory requirement in the department. Without these measures, true improvements are unlikely to occur. Respondents also advocated for greater accountability from senior leaders, suggesting that accessibility objectives should be integrated into their performance measurement agreements (PMAs).

65. Did you encounter barriers when trying to improve accessibility on your team?

- Yes (26%)
- No (53%)
- Not sure (21%)

66. If yes, what barriers have you encountered? Top 3 barriers encountered

- Resistance to change: many respondents highlighted a general resistance to change, which is a major barrier. Both employees and management are hesitant to adapt to new accessibility measures or to talk about employees' needs.
- Obstacles with management and lack of support: respondents identified significant difficulties, particularly concerning senior management's reluctance to implement necessary accommodations and the challenges posed by existing policies. While management may verbally support accessibility initiatives, there is often a gap between this support and what actually gets done.

- Lack of awareness: one major barrier mentioned was the lack of awareness about accessible documents and accessibility guidelines. Many respondents did not know how to create accessible content or properly implement accessibility measures, which makes it harder to create an inclusive work environment.

67. How easy is it for you to find information regarding accessibility resources and supports (e.g., adaptive technology, accessible IT, training on accessibility or plain language, M365 accessibility, Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential, etc.)?
    - Not at all (6%)
    - To a small extent (21%)
    - To a moderate extent (46%)
    - To a large extent (14%)
    - To a very large extent (6%)
    - Don’t know (7%)
68. What type(s) of training do you believe employees in a supervisory role (e.g., team lead, manager, supervisor), excluding EX-level positions, need to effectively support employees with disabilities? (Mark all that apply.)
    - Ableism (4%)
    - Accessibility barriers (8%)
    - Accessible communications and documentation practices (10%)
    - Awareness of intersecting identities (4%)
    - Conflict resolution (6%)
    - Disability awareness (visible and invisible) (11%)
    - Duty to Accommodate (DTA) (11%)
    - Emotional intelligence (7%)
    - Empathy and compassionate leadership (8%)
    - Hosting accessible meetings (6%)
    - Inclusive decision-making (6%)
    - Microaggressions (5%)
    - Trauma-informed leadership (6%)
    - Unconscious bias (8%)
    - None (0%)
    - Other (0%)
69. What would help you feel more equipped to support employees with disabilities? (Mark all that apply)
    - A central place (one-stop-shop) to find tools and resources (15%)
    - A simpler and more consistent accommodation process across ESDC (16%)
    - Access to expert advice (11%)
    - Help with sensitive conversations with employees (7%)
    - Less paperwork and clear steps (15%)
    - More inclusive hiring practices (e.g., for neurodivergent candidates) (4%)
    - Tools or support to manage performance while supporting accommodations (11%)

- Tools that help accommodations follow the employee through moves or hiring (9%)
- Not sure (0%)
- Other - Top 2 mentions (1%)
    - Delegation of DTA approval to managers: many respondents believe that managers should be given the authority to approve Duty to Accommodate (DTA) requests. They emphasized that this would make the process faster and reduce unnecessary steps, allowing for quicker responses to accommodation requests. This change could lead to more timely and appropriate support for employees with disabilities.
    - Shift in attitude among senior leadership: there is a call for a cultural shift among senior leaders. Respondents said that senior management should genuinely support for employees with disabilities by not just talking about it but also taking necessary action. Proper training for leadership and prioritizing employee well-being are essential. A consistent and supportive approach from senior leaders is crucial for fostering an environment where employees with disabilities feel valued and supported.

70. As a manager with a disability, what accessibility challenges or barriers have you faced? (Mark all that apply)

- Balancing my own accessibility needs with management responsibilities (17%)
- Dealing with bias, stigma, or assumptions from others (15%)
- Difficulty getting the accommodations or support I need (14%)
- Equal opportunities for all team members (8%)
- Haven’t faced any challenges or barriers (3%)
- Limited access to learning opportunities (3%)
- Navigating digital accessibility in the workplace (e.g., tools or systems that aren’t fully accessible) (8%)
- Navigating physical accessibility in the workplace (6%)
- Stress or mental health impacts related to accessibility barriers (13%)
- Supporting employees with disabilities while managing my own needs (8%)
- Not sure (2%)
- Other - Top 2 mentions (3%)
    - Limited access to employment opportunities: managers reported facing fewer job opportunities as a result of their disabilities, particularly due to their Duty to Accommodate status and the Return to Office requirements. This has made it harder for them to advance in their careers and stays stable in their jobs, forcing them to deal with complex barriers while attempting to reach their professional goals.
    - Conflicting messages regarding accommodations: managers pointed out a significant challenge with receiving mixed messages from various levels of management regarding accommodation needs. They expressed frustration at having to repeatedly explain why they need support for their disability and dealing with unclear information about whether their requests are possible.

71. What challenges or barriers have you experienced while supporting employees with disabilities? (Mark all that apply)

    - Balancing my needs while those of your employee(s) (9%)
    - Communicating effectively with employees who have different disability-related needs (8%)
    - Difficulty finding the right tools, resources or support (14%)
    - Finding workable accommodations within organizational limits (19%)
    - Handling bias or stigma from others on the team (8%)
    - Haven't faced any challenges or barriers (6%)
    - Mental or emotional stress related to supporting others (13%)
    - Navigating complex HR or accommodations policies (17%)
    - Providing mentorship while also managing my own accessibility needs (3%)
    - Not sure (1%)
    - Other - Top 2 challenges (2%)
        - Difficult management and lack of flexibility: respondents highlighted significant challenges stemming from difficult and inflexible management. They felt that senior leaders do not show empathy or understanding for the needs of employees with disabilities. This disconnect can frustrate managers who want to support their employees but feel hindered by existing policies or attitudes.
        - Stigma and lack of support from senior leadership: managers reported experiencing stigma and scrutiny from senior leaders for supporting employees who need accommodations, like Duty to Accommodate (DTA) requests. Rather than being recognized for their efforts, managers often have to justify the number of DTAs in their teams. This creates a challenging environment for advocating on behalf of employees. The focus tends to be more on following rules than on providing real support, making it harder for managers to support employees with disabilities effectively.

Unions representatives

The EAO met with 12 union representatives for the first time as part of our consultations, to enhance collaboration on accessibility and inclusion. The unions included were the Union of National Employees (UNE), Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU), Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

The goal of this meeting was to build relationships through open, respectful conversations, gather ideas to improve accessibility for union members, and learn from the representatives' experiences.

Key findings

Top 2 barriers faced by employees

- **Fear of disclosure**: employees with disabilities often hesitate to disclose their conditions due to concerns about being singled out or facing invasive questions.
- **Knowledge gaps**: many managers are unaware of available accommodations and their responsibilities. They often lack adequate training on how to discuss disabilities and navigate

accessibility processes. Issues like long medical paperwork and delays in getting technology make it ever harder.

Top 2 recommendations for improving accessibility and inclusion

- **Enhance manager training**: provide comprehensive training for managers on disabilities and accommodations to help them effectively support employees and recognize individual needs without stigma.
- **Streamline processes**: simplify accommodation procedures and make it clear that medical documentation costs can be reimbursed. Promote the Centre of Expertise for Optimizing Employee Potential to improve support and raise awareness of available resources.

Consultation questions

What recommendations and best practices can you share to help improve accessibility and inclusion at ESDC?

72. What feedback have you received from ESDC members particularly related to accessibility and accommodation needs that management or the EAO may not be aware of?
73. In your experience, are there any success stories, lessons learned, or strategies that have helped overcome accessibility barriers?
74. What one change could make a meaningful difference for your members when it comes to accessibility?

Appendix D: Client consultations

From the Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024, participants reported the following barriers affecting their experience:

- **Communication**: multiple service channels have recurring issues, including:
  - confusing or inaccessible communication (e.g., unclear letters, complex phone menus)
  - limited support for clients with low digital literacy and a lack of timely updates
- **Wait times**: many noted that long wait times to speak with Service Canada staff, whether on the phone or in-person, added stress, especially for those in difficult financial situations.
- **Challenges with applications**: completing and submitting applications was a significant pain point for CPPD participants and older individuals with lower digital literacy applying for EI, CPP, or OAS/GIS. They experienced difficulties due to a lack of clear information and guidance online, as well as challenges in navigating complex websites.
- **Inability to resolve issues**: clients often faced challenges in getting details about the status of their applications or finding answers to specific questions when speaking with Service Canada staff, both in-person and over the phone.

Key findings

Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024

- Clients with disabilities report lower satisfaction with their client experience Service Canada programs compared to those without disabilities through the Service Canada Client Experience Survey 2023 to 2024.
    - Overall service experience across all programs: 71% satisfaction among clients with disabilities compared to 84% for all clients.
    - For EI, satisfaction among clients with disabilities is 69% compared to 78% for clients without disabilities.
    - For CPP, satisfaction among clients with disabilities is 74% compared to 84% for clients without disabilities.
- Clients with disabilities were less satisfied with the service provided in-person, online and through specialized Call Centres compared to all clients.
    - In-person: satisfaction among clients with disabilities is 72% compared to 84% for clients without disabilities
    - Online: satisfaction among clients with disabilities is 64% compared to 73% for clients without disabilities
    - Specialized Call Centres: satisfaction among clients with disabilities is 65% compared to 75% for clients without disabilities.
- Among clients with disabilities, OAS/GIS clients were more likely to be satisfied (84%) while CPPD clients were less likely to be satisfied (52%) compared to all clients with disabilities.

Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) - User experience testing

During the usability testing held from October 2024 to March 2025, we collected the following input from persons with disabilities about the CDB application process.

- **Letters and communication**
    - Invitation letters didn't explain why people were invited, how much they could get, or when they'd hear back.
    - Approval letters were confusing, especially when payments were split into different types or no payment at all, causing stress.
    - Denial letters didn't clearly explain why someone was denied or how to fix it.
    - Other letters used unclear terms like "Protected B" or didn't explain what was missing.
- **Telephone system (interactive voice response)**
    - The phone system was long and hard to use, especially for people using assistive devices.
    - Menu options were confusing.
    - People wanted to be able to update their banking info and get confirmation of the change during the call.
- **Online application**
    - Some had trouble entering unit number or banking info, especially when using screen readers.
    - People in remote areas had to start over their applications due to internet outages.
    - Date pickers and formats for phone numbers or postal codes were confusing.

- Many wanted more information about the benefit before starting the application.

- **Legal representatives**
  - Legal reps found parts of the application unclear.
  - They weren't sure what documents were needed, or why certain questions were asked, which made it harder to support their clients effectively.

- **Disability adjudication project insights**
  - The application should include more than just medical info. It should reflect daily life challenges, like financial stress, emotional struggles, and physical limits.
  - People want more flexibility in who can provide supporting info, not just doctors, but also therapists, counsellors, and others. Many support using self-assessments, as long as others can back them up.

- **Launch of CDB in June 2025**
  - ESDC continued to monitor client experience after the launch. Clients had the opportunity to provide feedback and of those that did, over 80% were satisfied with the application process, and over 90% found the application easy to complete.
  - Early feedback has been actioned, and improvements continue to be made. For example, we heard that:
    - Some clients had difficulty finding the apply button. ESDC made changes right away. As a result, the proportion of clients reporting this problem fell from 5% to 0%.
    - Clients also struggled with the address fields that were prepopulating with incorrect information. Improvements were made and clients reporting this problem dropped from 5% to less than 2%.

Key recommendations

- **Simplify and clarify communication**
  - Revise letters (invitations, approvals, and denials) to be clearer, more informative, and less stressful for clients.
  - Use plain language and avoid jargon, such as "Protected B".

- **Improve the accessibility of digital and phone services**
  - Enhance online forms to ensure compatibility with screen readers and improve error handling features.
  - Simplify phone system menus and provide confirmation during calls.

- **Expand the flexibility in application support**
  - Allow a broader range of professionals (e.g., therapists, counselors) to contribute to disability assessments.
  - Include self-assessments backed by third-party validations to strengthen applications.

- **Provide better support and updates**

- Offer proactive communication regarding application status to keep clients informed throughout the process.
- Ensure staff receive comprehensive training to assist clients with disabilities effectively, particularly in online and phone interactions.

Appendix E: Priority area activities

Employment

Table 54: Employment activities 1.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.1.1.1 Focus on reducing the current recruitment gap by hiring employees with disabilities per our Workforce Availability	2026	In-progress

Table 55: Employment activities 1.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.1.2.1 Provide an accessible, inclusive and flexible hiring process that allows applicants to communicate their accommodation needs, following the standards set out in CAN/ASC-1.1:2024 for recruitment and hiring	2027	In-progress
1.1.2.2 Include the option for candidates to request the job description or an overview of the work environment	2027	In-progress
1.1.2.3 Adapt assessment methods based on individual accommodation needs and provide interview questions in advance whenever possible	2027	In-progress

Table 56: Employment activities 1.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.2.1.1 Update the ESDC Self-Identification form on PeopleSoft to ensure it is in an accessible format and promote the new form across the department. Align with the Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) Employment Standard clause 12.2.2 e) by keeping privacy in mind when handling disclosures and respecting the reasons behind a candidate's decision to self-identify	2026	Not started

Table 57: Employment activities 1.3.1

Activity	Timeline	Status

1.3.1.1 Update the onboarding process for new employees to ensure they can access information about ergonomics and duty to accommodate before their start date, to help them prepare for a smooth transition into the workplace	2028	In-progress
1.3.1.2 Update the Letter of Offer (LOO) and related tools to include wording in plain language. Ensure that the information is clear and easy to understand for all employees	2028	In-progress
1.3.1.3 Incorporate relevant information and tools in the LOO, requesting support to remove known work-related barriers before starting a new position at ESDC. Ensure a smoother onboarding experience for everyone	2026	In-progress
1.3.1.4 Update the managers' onboarding checklist to include giving office tours before the new employee's start date. Identify and address any potential workspace barriers and make sure to have regular follow-ups with new hires. Share important onboarding resources, such as key intranet links and contact information for the Centre of Expertise (CoE)	2028	In-progress

Table 58: Employment activities 1.4.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.4.1.1 Create an internal placement system for employees with disabilities who can't perform the main functions of their current position because of work-related barriers	2026	In-progress

Table 59: Employment activities 1.4.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.4.2.1 Promote the use of exit surveys with managers to gather feedback from employees with disabilities about their reasons for leaving. Include tailored questions to understand accessibility, accommodations, and workplace culture issues	2027	In-progress

Table 60: Employment activities 1.4.3

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.4.3.1 Ensure that PeopleSoft Module 9.2, ESDC's Human Resource Information System aligns with accessibility criteria from the start when developing new modules or features	2028	In-progress
1.4.3.2 Review existing modules, when feasible and within ESDC's span of control, to identify and remove employment barriers for employees with disabilities whenever possible.	2028	In-progress

Communicate accessibility criteria to the PeopleSoft vendor (Oracle) to help improve accessibility in their products		

Table 61: Employment activities 1.5.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.5.1.1 Provide seamless, timely, and integrated solutions for workplace accommodations in line with the Key Success Factors identified by the Better Accommodations Project	2027	In-progress
1.5.1.2 Enhance the functionality and user-friendliness of the PeopleSoft Accommodations Module to improve overall user experience	2027	In-progress

Table 62: Employment activities 1.5.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.5.2.1 Rename the Centre of Expertise to clearly show what it does and what services it offers. Help employees and managers understand its purpose with a descriptive title that clearly represents its mandate and services	2026	In-progress
1.5.2.2 Simplify the Centre of Expertise landing page by adding clear, updated definitions, relevant links, and key policies in plain language. Help employees and managers quickly find the information they need to assist with the accommodation process	2026	Not started

Table 63: Employment activities 1.5.3

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.5.3.1 Develop a clear plan to inform employees and managers about the implementation of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport, positioning it as a key tool to support conversations and the implementation of accessibility measures at ESDC	2026	In-progress

Table 64: Employment activities 1.5.4

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.5.4.1 Create a client feedback survey to gather insights that will help improve IT accessibility services for individuals with disabilities	2026	Not started

1.5.4.2 Define the IT requirements for a shared case management system, supporting an end-to-end approach for best-in-class accommodation services at ESDC	2027	Not started

Table 65: Employment activities 1.5.5

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.5.5.1 Speed up the governance approval process for employees who need new adaptive technology for DTAs by creating a faster review method across all pillars (e.g., IT Security, IT Accessibility, Privacy, etc.). This will help ensure employees receive the tools they need more quickly, in line with the requirements set by the Operational Change Management Committee	2027	In-progress

Table 66: Employment activities 1.6.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.6.1.1 Review, develop, and update tools and reference documents as needed to enhance the Duty to Accommodate (DTA) process and improve overall experience for employees and managers, in line with the guidance and tools provided by BAP	2028	In-progress
1.6.1.2 Develop mandatory training for managers on the duty to accommodate (DTA) to equip them with the skills, knowledge, videos, and resources needed to effectively handle DTA requests	2026	In-progress

Table 67: Employment activities 1.6.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.6.2.1 Create and implement a DTA Policy to support a cultural shift toward a renewed approach to the accommodation process, informed by the BAP outcomes, with the goal of improving the process, clarifying expectations, and standardizing practices across ESDC	2027	In-progress
1.6.2.2 Develop a seamless end-to-end process that provides clear guidance for managers and employees when responding to accommodation requests, while shortening procurement timelines for office and IT hardware/software purchases	2027	In-progress

Table 68: Employment activities 1.7.1

Activity	Timeline	Status

1.7.1.1 Create a Group Mentoring program for Aspiring Managers with Disabilities. Connect mentors with small groups of mentees to have regular discussions about career growth and leadership development	2026	In-progress
1.7.1.2 Add skills tagging and talent mapping features within Saba learning system. Support job needs, career goals, and different interests based on each user's profile. Identify and match individual skills with job opportunities to help employees grow in their careers and ensure that resources are used effectively within the department	2027	In-progress

Table 69: Employment activities 1.7.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.7.2.1 Provide career development support for employees with disabilities to help them improve their skills and gain recognition through training, education, and leadership opportunities. This will lead to increased promotion rates by removing barriers in the criteria for career development and promotion. Use an intersectional accessibility lens to ensure that all employees can participate fully	2026	In-progress
1.7.2.2 Support employees in acting roles and ensuring their higher-level skills are acknowledged for career progression, while also improving performance management to prevent them from being stuck in specific jobs	2026	In-progress
1.7.2.3 Develop individual accommodation plans to support employees in their success and ensure that their accommodation requests do not hurt their career opportunities	2026	In-progress

Table 70: Employment activities 1.8.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.8.1.1 Ensure the self-identification process is optional and protects privacy	2027	In-progress

Table 71: Employment activities 1.9.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
1.9.1.1 Maintain and build on respect by aligning with Accessibility Standards Canada Employment Standard clause 10.4 1 (g, h), which protects employees from retaliation when they report incidents of discrimination based	2026	In-progress

on disability. Encourage a culture of inclusivity and respect by holding regular workshops and communication campaigns		

Built environment

Table 72: Built environment activities 2.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
2.1.1.1 Advance workplace modernization by implementing ESDC/GC workplace design standards where appropriate to enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and employee well-being, while ensuring strategic alignment with the Real Property program of work	2028	In-progress
2.1.1.2 Educate and inform employees on how to effectively engage with the space to maximize its intended functionality and design benefits	2028	In-progress
2.1.1.3 Continue to pilot accessible furnishings for Service Canada Centres to determine options to accommodate employees and clients of various abilities	2028	In-progress

Table 73: Built environment activities 2.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
2.2.1.1 Establish a standardized floor plan design verification process to ensure alignment with accessibility codes and principles, for all existing and new sites	2028	In-progress
2.2.1.2 Collaborate and partner with an organization like the Accessibility Standards Canada to further influence and stay up to date on future standards and/or changes	2028	In-progress

Table 74: Built environment activities 2.3.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
2.3.1.1 Maintain regular consultations with the Employees with Disabilities Network to ensure accessibility standards are applied in a relevant manner	2027	In-progress
2.3.1.2 Conduct evaluations with employees with disabilities to assess the effectiveness of implemented design features, in newly delivered spaces	2028	In-progress

Table 75: Built environment activities 2.4.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
2.4.1 Identify requirements to PSPC to ensure compliance with Accessibility Standards Canada for future site selection	2028	In-progress

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Table 76: ICT activities 3.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.1.1.1 Create a Directive on IT Accessibility Conformance to help implement the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Policy on Service, GC Enterprise Architecture Framework and GC Digital within ESDC. Set clear departmental standards and describe the steps that clients need to take to meet IT accessibility requirements	2027	In-progress

Table 77: ICT activities 3.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.1.2.1 Publish Accessibility Compliance Reports (ACRs) for Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) products. ACRs will detail the product's accessibility features, highlight any areas where it doesn't meet standards, and suggest barrier-free alternatives for accessing inaccessible content. Include plans to fix any compliance gaps to help create inclusive digital environments, improve compliance with risk management, guide purchasing and IT governance decisions, encourage ongoing improvement, and build transparency and trust with all clients	2027	Not started

Table 78: ICT activities 3.1.3

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.1.3.1 Work with accessibility experts, project managers, and developers to include accessibility requirements from the beginning in project templates, user story definitions, design reviews, code reviews, and testing processes within project management tools	2028	In-progress
3.1.3.2 Provide training and documentation to ensure that all teams consistently apply these requirements using the SDLC Guidebook	2028	In-progress

Table 79: ICT activities 3.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.2.1.1 Implement a mandatory self-paced “Introduction to Digital Accessibility” training course for all employees and expand learning options to cover tools and content used in their daily work, such as the Microsoft Office suite, non-web documents, web content, and web pages	2026	In-progress
3.2.1.2 Provide regular IT accessibility awareness programs to emphasize the importance of creating accessible digital content throughout the department	2027	In-progress

Table 80: ICT activities 3.2.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.2.2.1 Create and share detailed IT Accessibility Guidelines and Best Practices to help employees produce and maintain accessible digital content. These guidelines should follow recognized standards like WCAG and EN 301 549 and address essential areas such as software development, document creation, web content, and procurement	2026	In-progress

Table 81: ICT activities 3.2.3

Activity	Timeline	Status
3.2.3.1 Conduct a pilot program to test how well Generative AI tools (like AI-powered screen readers, real-time captioning, and code explanation tools) improve digital accessibility for employees and users with disabilities	2027	In-progress
3.2.3.2 Survey participants of the pilot program to determine if their experience with Generative AI tools improved digital accessibility for employees and users with disabilities	2027	In-progress

Communication, other than Information and Communication Technologies

Table 82: Communication, other than ICT activities 4.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
4.1.1.1 Promote accessibility in internal communications by sharing tips and best practices in corporate messages on a quarterly basis. Highlight new and existing tools, like corporate templates, and share success stories to encourage everyone to focus on accessibility	2025 to 2028	In-progress

4.1.1.2 Encourage an “accessibility by design” mindset in internal communications for all employees. Support teams and employees in adopting this goal by updating existing document templates and creating new ones. Include and promote practical tips for keeping templates and communications accessible. Highlight ESDC’s services that help with accessible communications, such as plain language review and ITAO document audits, and promote formal learning opportunities	2025 to 2028	In-progress
4.1.1.3 Establish and integrate feedback mechanisms in corporate communications for employees to report internal communications accessibility barriers	2025 to 2028	Not started

Table 83: Communication, other than ICT activities 4.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
4.1.2.1 Review materials with an accessibility focus to ensure they are written in plain language. Share guidance to help federal employees use the right language when communicating about disability in writing, speaking, and images	2025 to 2028	In-progress

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Table 84: Procurement activities 5.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
5.1.1.1 Ensure business owners know about the resources available to help them set accessibility requirements for the goods and services they purchase	2026	In-progress
5.1.1.2 Track and monitor accessibility in our procurement contracts, statements of work, and business requirements to measure our progress in making procurement accessible	2026	In-progress

Table 85: Procurement activities 5.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
5.2.1.1 Create or adopt an existing list of assistive and adaptive technology requirements, identify and approve vendors that focus on assistive technology. Maintain a list of pre-approved vendors who offer assistive and adaptive technology, using different supply methods to speed up procurement and minimize delays	2028	In-progress

5.2.1.2 Make the purchasing process easier by cutting down on administrative steps and streamlining how vendors are selected, which will ensure quicker access to the needed equipment	2028	In-progress

Design and delivery of programs and services

Table 86: Programs and services activities 6.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.1.1.1 Remove or simplify complex questions to make the form easier to fill out	2027	In-progress
6.1.1.2 Organize the form into clear sections with step-by-step guidance	2027	In-progress
6.1.1.3 Allow clients to describe their situations in their own words through MSCA document upload or providing additional details by mail	2027	In-progress
6.1.1.4 Give clearer and simpler instructions on how to apply or qualify for benefits	2027	In-progress
6.1.1.5 Increase promotion and availability of the alternative format for applications that have larger font size	2027	In-progress
6.1.1.6 Provide an option for clients to answer questions verbally instead of just in writing	2027	In-progress

Table 87: Programs and services activities 6.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.1.2.1 Conduct usability testing with a diverse group of users, including those with disabilities	2027	In-progress
6.1.2.2 Follow the Accessibility Standards Canada CAN-ASC-5.2.1 3.1: ❖ provide essential service information that meets clients' communication needs ❖ allow access to services in-person, by phone, digitally, or through other methods ❖ ensure that services are delivered in a way that meets each person's individual needs	2027	In-progress

Table 88: Programs and services activities 6.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.2.1.1 Ensure the information about services and benefits is regularly updated and written in plain language at a grade 8 reading level for better clarity	2027	In-progress
6.2.1.2 Ensure that all external web content meets accessibility standards, including CAN/ASC – EN 301 549:2024, which includes rules for ICT products and services	2027	In-progress
6.2.1.3 Align with Clause 9 in the standard, which has specific technical requirements for web pages and web applications: ❖ make text easy to read and understand ❖ ensure that content appears and works in predictable ways ❖ help users avoid and fix mistakes	2027	In-progress

Table 89: Programs and services activities 6.2.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.2.2.1 Ensure that persons with disabilities can easily find and understand the information about programs. Currently, there is greater difficulty in finding information, tools, and resources on the web for clients with disabilities. Aim to close this experience gap	2028	In-progress
6.2.2.2 Ensure that persons with disabilities can easily navigate the steps to apply for programs and aim to close the experience gap	2028	In-progress

Table 90: Programs and services activities 6.3.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.3.1.1 Ensure neurodiverse clients can access services in an accessible way, including having a closed room to wait and be served in	2028	In progress

Table 91: Programs and services activities 6.4.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.4.1.1 Introduce a callback option to reduce the need for clients to wait on hold	2028	In-progress

6.4.1.2 Provide estimated wait times so clients can choose whether to wait or request a callback	2028	In-progress
6.4.1.3 Offer additional services for clients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities	2028	In-progress

Table 92: Programs and Services activities 6.5.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
6.5.1.1 Reinforce engagement between departmental accessibility experts and employees who design and deliver services to clients to strengthen knowledge-sharing and collaboration on service accessibility initiatives	2028	In-progress
6.5.1.2 Share and promote existing accessibility informational resources, standards, and guidelines to enhance employees' understanding of how to identify, remove, and prevent barriers	2028	In-progress
6.5.1.3 Update and promote ESDC's AccessAbility Playbook to ensure it provides up-to-date guidance on delivering accessible client service	2028	In-progress

Workplace culture

Table 93: Workplace culture activities 7.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.1.1.1 Promote and enhance awareness of accessibility and disability inclusion through an anti-ableist approach that confronts inequalities, negative stereotypes, and stigma	2026	In-progress
7.1.1.2 Align with Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) and support a culture of inclusion at all stages of employment, focusing on intersectionality and marginalized groups	2026	In-progress
7.1.1.3 Include the delivery of annual department-wide programs and communications for events like National Accessibility Awareness Week (NAAW), International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), and other related initiatives	2026 to 2028	In-progress
7.1.1.4 Develop and deliver toolkits to learn about disability-related barriers and identify approaches for addressing them	2028	In-progress
7.1.1.5 Provide equity-based training for hiring managers, with a focus on intersectionality. Ensuring inclusive and	2028	In-progress

accessible recruitment, retention, advancement, and assessment processes		
7.1.1.6 Evaluate learning events impacts through employee surveys and participation data	2028	In-progress

Table 94: Workplace culture activities 7.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.1.2.1 Include a clear and specific accessibility commitment in employee performance agreements. Play an active role in promoting a culture of inclusion and improving accessibility to help the Department and Government of Canada reach their goals	2026	In-progress

Table 95: Workplace culture activities 7.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.2.1.1 Create an advisory group of employees with disabilities to co-develop recommendations for the future ESDC accessibility plans and progress reports in the spirit of Nothing without Us	2025 to 2028	In-progress
7.2.1.2 Obtain the group's suggestions on barrier removal in the workplace and accessibility initiatives. Incorporate the recommendations into solution development for business lead consideration	2025 to 2028	In-progress

Table 96: Workplace culture activities 7.2.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.2.2.1 Ensure ongoing support for the EwDN. Consult and work closely with the EwDN on creating and carrying out accessibility initiatives to help the network strengthen its role and influence	Ongoing	In-progress

Table 97: Workplace culture activities 7.3.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.3.1.1 Expand ESDC's "Knock on Our Door" campaign to showcase the confidential and unbiased resources available to support all employees, both with and without disabilities	2027	In-progress

Table 98: Workplace culture activities 7.3.2

Activity	Timeline	Status

7.3.2.1 Ensure all tools related to accessibility are gathered in one place on the ESDC intranet site and ensure that the platform works well with screen readers and other assistive technologies. Align with Accessibility Canada Standards clause 10.7 (a)	2026	In-progress
7.3.2.2 Provide a centralized online resource hub that includes information about workplace policies, external caregiver support programs, stress management strategies, helpful resources, best practices, and frequently asked questions	2026	In-progress
7.3.2.3 Develop and implement approach to enable service dogs in training, where operationally feasible, to accompany their volunteer to work	2026	In-progress

Table 99: Workplace culture activities 7.4.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.4.1.1 Review, update, and redesign the "Richness of Diversity and Inclusion (RDI)" mandatory training module to ensure that all employees are aware of and understand how to remove barriers in the workplace. This training should also help them better understand the perspectives of their colleagues with disabilities	2026	In-progress
7.4.1.2 Educate managers about the experiences of persons with disabilities and how to best support them. Focus on including the experiences of different equity groups with disabilities, disability inclusion, neurodiversity, mental health and well-being, and self-advocacy	2026	In-progress

Table 100: Workplace culture activities 7.5.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.5.1.1 Ensure that alternative training formats (like audio, visuals, and text captions) are easily available, and that all training materials are designed to be accessible and tested (following WCAG 2.1 standards). Encourage open communication with users about their accessibility needs	2028	In-progress
7.5.1.2 Increase the use of the Adapt Authoring Tool among partners throughout the Department to ensure that eLearning materials meet accessibility requirements	2026	In-progress (Adapt reports)

Table 101: Workplace culture activities 7.5.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
7.5.2.1 Ensure that Saba, ESDC's Learning Management System, remains accessible by addressing known accessibility issues and consistently monitoring it to meet the established standards	2028	In-progress
7.5.2.2 Implement an enhanced departmental Learning Management System (LMS) as part of the LMS renewal, ensuring it meets the accessibility standards and requirements	2028	In-progress

Data, research and analysis

Table 102: Data activities 8.1.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
8.1.1.1 Gather insights from focus group consultations with persons with disabilities who have different intersecting identities to inform future ESDC accessibility plans and progress reports	2025 to 2028	In-progress
8.1.1.2 Enhance the performance measurement framework by updating KPIs, standardizing how data is collected, and using evidence-based reporting to effectively track progress. Aim for measurable results with clear benchmarks. Improve the framework and create specific measures for actions and activities	2025 to 2028	In-progress

Table 103: Data activities 8.1.2

Activity	Timeline	Status
8.1.2.1 Create a data and research plan aimed at increasing the amount of information and studies related to accessibility. Use data sets and partnerships with organizations like the Infinity Network, Statistics Canada, Public Service Employee Survey Results, and the Chief Data Officer to support this effort	2026	In-progress

Table 104: Data activities 8.2.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
8.2.1.1 Centralize and simplify the consultation processes with EwDN and other employee networks	2025 to 2028	In-progress
8.2.1.2 Consolidate engagement efforts, use existing data, and provide clear updates on outcomes and how the	2025 to 2028	In-progress

information gathered will be used. Ensure transparency through regular reporting and follow-ups, and make sure that everyone we consult understands how their input will be utilized		

Table 105: Data activities 8.3.1

Activity	Timeline	Status
8.3.1.1 Gather feedback from the public. Collect employee feedback on how the ESDC accessibility plan is being implemented. Create a structured follow-up process within the feedback framework system loop to make sure that feedback leads to real changes	2028	In-progress