Department of Finance Canada
Accessibility Progress Report 2024

Canada

Contents

Introduction

The Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada provides a vision and framework for how the public service can identify, prevent and remove physical, systemic and cultural obstacles to the participation of persons with disabilities. Its aim is to create the most accessible public service in the world – an environment where persons with disabilities can flourish. When persons with disabilities in the public service can focus on their work and their service to Canadians, instead of combatting the systems and structures that keep them marginalized, all Canadians can benefit.

The strategy was developed following the passage of the *Accessible Canada Act*, which received Royal Assent in July 2019 and sets expectations for the achievement of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. It seeks to:

- enforce the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers for organizations under federal jurisdiction, including departments such as the Department of Finance Canada

- ensure the full participation in society of persons with physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairments

The Act requires all regulated entities, including federal organizations such as the Department of Finance Canada, to:

- develop and publish an accessibility action plan:

  o the plan needs to be created in consultation with people with disabilities

  o the plan must outline the strategies for improving and meeting legal accessibility duties

  o plans are to be published publicly and updated every three years or sooner

- implement a process to receive and respond to feedback on accessibility and on the plan itself in a timely manner

- publish annual progress reports in consultation with people with disabilities to communicate progress made against the plan and address feedback received

The Department of Finance Canada at a glance

The Department of Finance Canada had 949 active employees as of December 1, 2024. The department:

- is responsible for the overall stewardship of the Canadian economy

- helps the Government of Canada develop and implement strong and sustainable economic, fiscal, tax, social, security, and international and financial sector policies and programs that reflect Canadian values

- ensures that the federal government is supported by high-quality advice

In fulfilling its requirements under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the department can implement meaningful change and deliver on its strategic outcomes.

General

Departmental feedback process

A feedback process is in place at the Department of Finance Canada. Individuals can submit feedback relating to accessibility and the departmental Accessibility Action Plan through various channels, including email, phone and mail. Feedback can either be provided with contact information or anonymously. Acknowledgement of receipt and responses are provided only if contact information is provided.

Acknowledgement of feedback is provided within two weeks of receipt and is provided by the same channel through which the feedback was received unless the feedback was sent anonymously.

All feedback is taken into consideration during the publication of annual progress reports on the implementation of the department's Accessibility Action Plan and in the renewal of the plan.

Feedback contact

Name: Octavia James, Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility
Email address: octavia.james@fin.gc.ca
Phone number: 1-833-712-2292
Teletypewriter: 613-369-3230
Mailing address: 90 Elgin St, room 10-108, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E1

Other formats

To request a copy of the Accessibility Action Plan and progress reports in alternate formats such as large print, braille or audio, use the following methods of contact:

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Email address: octavia.james@fin.gc.ca
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Executive summary

The Department of Finance Canada developed its first Accessibility Action Plan in 2022 as an important first step toward realizing the *Accessible Canada Act's* commitment to creating a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

The department is committed to proactively eliminating and preventing barriers faced by persons with disabilities and ensuring greater opportunities for all. The plan provides a strong foundation for the work that lies ahead to make the department inclusive by design and accessible by default.

This report is the second annual progress report on the department's Accessibility Action Plan and will provide an update on the actions taken during 2024 that were proposed in the plan. This includes a review of what has been completed, what is ongoing, as well as commitments for the years ahead to implement the plan and address barriers to accessibility in the seven key areas identified under the *Accessible Canada Act*:

1. Employment

2. Built Environment

3. Information and communications technologies (ICT)

4. Communications other than ICT

5. Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods

6. Culture

7. Transportation[1]

The commitments and activities related to the "design and delivery of programs and services" key area are reflected under other key areas identified for the department.

Overarching enabling activities

In addition to addressing barriers to accessibility in the seven key areas identified under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the department continues its work toward implementing two overarching enabling initiatives that will provide the foundational framework required to improve accessibility:

1. Government of Canada (GC) Workplace Accessibility Passport

2. Finance's Accessibility Centre of Expertise

Overarching enabling activity 1: Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport

The department was an early adopter of the passport and continues to promote its use to managers and employees. The passport helps address obstacles that federal public service employees and applicants with disabilities face in obtaining the tools and supports needed to perform at their best and succeed in the workplace. This tool was designed to travel with employees who require accommodations throughout their federal public service career, reducing the need to renegotiate workplace supports when employees change jobs.

Status update 2024

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) continues the development of the digital version of the passport, with a targeted launch date of summer 2025. Once the digital version is finalized, Finance will fully implement it as a resource for employees and managers to support the accommodations process. The department continues to provide training to all managers and employees on the use of the passport, not just those who identify as persons with disabilities, to promote its full use and help remove the stigma toward disability.

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[1] The Act's recommended transportation pillar was initially not included in the department's 2022 Accessibility Action Plan; however, it was included in the department's accessibility progress reports.

Overarching enabling activity 2: Finance's Accessibility Centre of Expertise

Initially, the Workplace Accommodation Centre was to be a collaborative pilot program between the Department of Finance Canada and TBS. The department has since begun the implementation of its Accessibility Centre of Expertise (FACE), a centralized and neutral case management model for requests for accommodations that will provide services to all employees who request an accommodation, not exclusively employees who have self-identified as a person with a disability. The approach is expected to:

- streamline workplace accommodation practices
- improve employees' experiences
- facilitate the accommodations process for managers
- make expert guidance on accessibility readily available
- support a "yes by default" culture

Status update 2024

Due to resource constraints, the previous commitment to have the Department of Finance Canada and TBS create a joint Workplace Accommodation Centre is no longer feasible. A decision has been made that the Department of Finance Canada will establish FACE independently from TBS. To enable its establishment and support implementation, the department has onboarded an Accessibility Navigator.

The official launch of FACE is planned for March 2025.

Employment

Objective

Job seekers and current employees with disabilities see the Department of Finance Canada as an employer of choice and can contribute at their full potential through access to employment opportunities and career advancement in a hybrid workplace.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following eight barriers to employment:

1. put accommodation measures in place more promptly
2. simplify documentation requirements (medical reports and specialist opinions)
3. avoid having to repeat the accommodations process with every change in position
4. reduce obstacles for accommodation requests
5. ensure that selection processes and assessment tools are created with accessibility needs in mind at the onset
6. encourage and promote from within the department through the use of talent management plans and mentoring

7. increase awareness of disability inclusion policies to make sure everyone has the same opportunities for advancement

8. provide additional assistance in preparing for promotions

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to employment.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Design and implement recruiting and talent strategies to hire, develop and retain more persons with disabilities (and close the representation gap).

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- Ongoing and regular training on bias and barriers in the staffing process for hiring managers.

- Ongoing use of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport.

- "Train the trainer" sessions on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport to be provided to Department of Finance Canada representatives as a first step to giving training sessions for managers and employees.

- Continued sharing of best practices and programs on hiring persons with disabilities, including the Public Service Commission of Canada's Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities (FIPCD).

- Continued participation in career fairs such as the Public Service Commission of Canada's Ottawa Career Fair for Students and Recent Graduates with Disabilities, and promotion of services available to persons with disabilities in the department, including information about Finance's Accessibility Navigator.

- Use of the FIPCD to hire an intern.

- Following previous collaboration and success in hiring from LiveWorkPlay, continued collaboration for additional employment opportunities, and ongoing support of the initiative through awareness sessions and mentoring.

- Ongoing commitment to address hiring graduates who have identified as persons with disabilities through the department's annual hiring campaign.

Shorter-term commitment 2

Implement a departmental mentorship program focused on supporting equity groups.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- Mentorship and sponsorship programs launched their first cohort in fall 2024. The programs are created to provide support, develop and retain employees from equity groups, including persons with disabilities.

  o The mentorship program involves a mentor providing a mentee with guidance, advice and support to help them develop skills and advance their career, often through personal interaction and sharing of experience. There are 58 matches for this program at

the time this report was written.

- o The sponsorship program involves an executive sponsor actively advocating for and promoting a protégé's advancement, such as recommending them for promotions or opportunities, often leveraging the sponsor's influence and network to help the protégé succeed. There are 21 sponsorship matches at the time this report was written.

Shorter-term commitment 3

Revise current accessibility processes to eliminate barriers to access and align them with accessibility standards, including but not limited to the "tell us once" principle.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 3:

- The department has onboarded an Accessibility Navigator to establish the Finance Accommodation Centre of Expertise (FACE). FACE serves as a one-stop shop for accommodations for employees and managers and supports a "yes by default" approach using neutral case management.

- The Accessibility Navigator is also responsible for supporting the goals set out in the departmental Accessibility Action Plan. The department continues to promote the use of the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport, a tool to support employees requesting accommodations.

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

Longer-term commitment 1

Identify and communicate departmental and cross-government training and awareness programs related to disability inclusion and accessibility to all employees (for example, formal training, speaker sessions) to raise awareness and combat unconscious bias.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- As reported above, the department continues to provide training to hiring managers on bias and barriers in the staffing process.

- The department supports the TBS-FIN Accessibility Network in planning awareness-building events on employment, hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. Events for National AccessAbility Week, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities were held and included guest speakers to promote disability inclusion and awareness-building.

- The Accessibility Navigator serves as a consistent resource and provides expertise that includes providing outreach and information sessions to managers and employees.

- The Accessibility Navigator has joined the Office of Public Service Accessibility GC Workplace Accessibility Passport Adopter Community of Practice to receive the latest information on progress and implementation of the digital passport.

- The Accessibility Navigator will complete the "train the trainer" course in winter 2025 on the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport, and training will be provided to Finance employees and managers in the future.

- As reported above, there is continued participation in career fairs such as the following:

  o the Public Service Commission of Canada's National Recruitment Directorate Career Fair for Students and Recent Grads with Disabilities

  o promotion of services available to persons with disabilities in the department, including information about the department's Accessibility Navigator

Longer-term commitment 2

Review organizational policies and processes, including recruitment and onboarding, with a pan-disability lens to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming workplace for persons with disabilities.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- ongoing assessment and consideration of best practices in inclusive and accessible staffing, such as promoting pools and inventories of candidates with disabilities

- ongoing monitoring of hiring goals for persons with disabilities for executives and non-executives at the branch and department level established by the department in 2023; these goals continue to take into account the department's objective to have a workforce that is representative of the workforce availability and the public service's commitment to hire 5,000 net new persons with disabilities

- as reported above, mentorship and sponsorship programs have been launched to support career progressions for employees from employment equity groups

The built environment

Objective

Clients and employees of the department, including those with disabilities, can make best use of its facilities through barrier-free access.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following nine barriers in the built environment:

1. Ensure that ramps are in place at ground-level access points and that regular maintenance occurs in all seasons.

2. Halls, doorways and security gates must be wide enough to pass through in a wheelchair, with room for work materials and other assistive devices.

3. Elevator doors must allow time for people with restricted mobility and low vision to enter and exit.

4. Automatic door openers need to be in place and maintained, with temporary solutions in place when they are out of order.

5. Temporary circulation routes that are put in place due to maintenance or construction must take

accessibility into account.

6. Ensure that qualitative and experiential elements of a healthy workplace, such as lighting, noise levels and decor, are in place.

7. Designated accessibility-friendly space and seating room should exist in gathering and meeting spaces, especially for large-scale events.

8. Consider that motion detection–based automatic lighting systems cause painful interference with hearing aids.

9. Furnishings with static positioning only fit certain people, so adjustable furniture should be considered.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to the built environment.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Create a standard accessibility checklist to monitor and evaluate the accessibility of workspaces on an ongoing basis. Include a strategy to integrate the checklist into existing accommodations processes, with a clear roadmap for providing these services.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- An accessibility strategy for the built environment has been developed and is being implemented in tandem with Finance's Accessibility Action Plan. The strategy was created following an audit of all Finance workspaces at 90 Elgin St in Ottawa against the most current accessibility standards, including the Ontario Building Code, CAN/CSA B651-18 (national standards) and barrier-free design guides. The strategy identifies key actions and timelines for improvements in accessibility of the built environment.

- A standard accessibility checklist for the built environment has been created to track progress on improving its accessibility. The checklist also identifies areas for improvement and supports the strategy.

- Audits on the built environment will be conducted regularly to:

    o identify any barriers or areas for improvement

    o update the checklist and strategy

Shorter-term commitment 2

Develop an approved product catalogue that is regularly updated with new office furniture, fixtures, and component product upgrades and adaptations. Include an accessible delivery plan for these accommodations.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- A web page available to all Finance employees has been redesigned and includes:

  o contact information for a team trained in ergonomics and built environment adjustments

  o adjustability instructions for the department's standard ergonomic chairs

- Ongoing implementation of the second phase of the web page is underway to further develop information on workplace furniture.

- An accessibility review has been added to the approval process for onsite furniture changes.

- The team responsible for furniture changes will work with the Accessibility Navigator to ensure accessible provision of these accommodations.

Shorter-term commitment 3

Communicate availability of key card programming for automatic door operators.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 3:

- The option to have employee building access cards programmed to automatically open doors without the need to push the button for existing automatic door openers is available.

- Two communication approaches are in development to share information about the access card feature to automatically open doors.

- The need for more automatic door openers in key areas has been identified and included in the new accessibility checklist and strategy.

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to the built environment.

Longer-term commitment 1

Review emergency procedures for accessibility and include alternative supports for persons with disabilities (employees and visitors). Assess the experience of persons with disabilities during practice drills.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- The department has ordered evacuation chairs for each Finance floor at 90 Elgin St in Ottawa to assist individuals in need for building evacuations. Training and procedures for using the evacuation chairs will be set up once they are delivered.

- A map for Finance's Conference Centre is being developed to help employees and visitors navigate the building.

- An automatic door opener enabled during evacuations is being added to the main entrance to Finance's Conference Centre to improve evacuation accessibility.

Obtain additional resources and funding to support accessibility for internal and external large events and meetings.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- An ongoing relationship with the Translation Bureau of Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) will be established to support procurement of sign language interpretation and simultaneous translation services.

- An active offer of accommodation is made for all department-wide events. If any attendees request an accommodation at cost, the event organizer will receive support from the department.

Information and communications technologies

Objective

ICT provides all users, including those with disabilities, with leading-edge tools that enhance capacity and improve efficiency.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following six barriers relating to ICT:

1. Ensure that awareness of new and emerging accessible and enabling technology is up to date and that this information reaches a wide audience.

2. Ensure that adaptive technologies such as speech recognition software are readily available.

3. Regularly update internal digital systems as new accessibility technologies emerge.

4. Reduce wait times for Government of Canada–wide support services such as Shared Services Canada's (SSC's) Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program.

5. Ensure that the catalogue of accessibility functions and assistive technology is available and reaches its target audience.

6. Increase awareness of readily available training and assistance.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to information and communications technology.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Provide guidance to front-line information technology (IT) staff on supporting and communicating with persons with disabilities set up assistive technology. Defining the subset of staff that need training will be the department's first-step priority.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- Processes have been implemented to respond to requests for adaptive technologies, and front-line IT staff are aware of these procedures and adaptive tools.

- Adaptive technology procurement processes have been included in the department's service desk operating procedures.

- Work is ongoing to soon add information on adaptive technology procurement processes to a knowledge base. This knowledge base will help familiarize staff with the content and catalogue of tools.

Shorter-term commitment 2

Build in accessibility from the start when developing new IT solutions and services in design and testing by engaging employees who self-identify as persons with disabilities.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- Accommodations are provided on a case-by-case basis to address clients' individual needs.

- The IT service team collaborates with the AAACT program where possible for added guidance on best practices and solutions.

Shorter-term commitment 3

Leverage SSC's AAACT team to test solutions with a broad range of adaptive technologies when possible.

The following step was taken to meet shorter-term commitment 3:

- The IT service team has established ongoing relationships with and consults SSC's AAACT program to test and implement solutions that meet accommodation and IT requirements.

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to ICT.

Longer-term commitment 1

Ensure that accessibility features are enabled on all devices provided by SSC.

The following step was taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- Training for the IT service team on enabling accessibility features in hardware and software for employees will be provided to ensure familiarization with options and features available.

Longer-term commitment 2

Assess accessibility of the department's existing digital assets and develop remediation plans (for example, intranet, technology platforms, video-conferencing technologies, ticketing system).

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- Finance's IT team is aware of and will apply the procurement process for adaptive technologies on a case-by-case basis.

- The AACT program is engaged for feedback on the department's adaptive technology requests on a

case-by-case basis.

- Core digital systems are kept up to date with vendor releases, including operating systems and core productivity tools.

Longer-term commitment 3

Work with stakeholders, SSC and its AAACT program to build the department's inventory and procurement processes for adaptive technologies.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 3:

- The department's IT service team is aware of the tools and processes for procurement of technology-based equipment and software.

- As reported above, there is ongoing collaboration with partners such as the AAACT program and SSC. These collaborations support procurement and research for adaptive technology where needed.

Communications other than information and communications technology

Objective

Make all communications accessible and inclusive for the public and employees.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following four barriers to communications other than ICT:

1. Ensure that information is always accessible to all employees.

2. Consistently provide transcripts and captioning for presentations, meetings and videos.

3. Ensure that documents and templates created internally are always fully accessible.

4. Ensure that departmental events and activities are always inclusive and accessible to all employees.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to communications other than ICT.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Enable the live captioning option in Microsoft Teams for employee use during meetings and/or provide transcripts of meeting minutes afterward.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- Live captioning options in Microsoft Teams have been enabled for employee use during meetings.

- The live captioning option in Microsoft Teams was promoted in a department-wide newsletter and web page and on InfoScreen monitors throughout Finance's office spaces.

Shorter-term commitment 2

Provide training and guidance to all employees to better understand accessible communication techniques (including plain language writing) and incorporate inclusive practices for larger meetings and events.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- Guidance has been developed to support employees to create accessible documents and is being promoted to employees.

- An Accessibility Hub on Finance's intranet page has been created and is available to all Finance employees. The hub includes guidance tools and information on accessibility in communications.

- Guidance for employees to better understand accessible communication techniques (such as plain language writing) is in development.

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to communications other than ICT.

Longer-term commitment 1

Include and improve consistent live captioning in both official languages during large meetings and events.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- As reported above, live captioning options in Microsoft Teams have been enabled for employee use during meetings.

- An active offer of accommodation has also been implemented for all departmental event and meeting invitations. The Internal Communications team, Facilities team, Occupational Health and Safety team, and Accessibility Navigator will support meeting and event organizers if they receive accommodation requests, including accessibility services such as live captioning and sign language interpretation.

Longer-term commitment 2

Create an internal repository (for example, on Finance's intranet) for accessibility educational resources, including compliance guidelines, accommodations support, disability awareness training, best practices and other key information.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- As reported above, the Accessibility Hub intranet page has been developed and serves as a single source of information for guidance to employees on accessible communication, accessibility tools and training opportunities.

- New accessibility tools have been communicated to Finance employees through Finance's intranet page as well as through multiple issues of the department's newsletter.

Develop relationships with accessible communication providers to use when needed, for example, American Sign Language (ASL), Quebec Sign Language (QSL) and Indigenous sign languages.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 3:

- Outreach to accessible communication providers (ASL, QSL and Indigenous sign languages) has been completed and is ongoing.

- As reported above, an active offer of accommodation has been added to all departmental event and meeting invitations. The Internal Communications team, Facilities team, Occupational Health and Safety team, and the Accessibility Navigator will support meeting and event organizers should they receive requests for accommodations, including accessibility services such as live captioning and ASL and/or LSQ interpretation. This support will create more opportunities for collaboration with accessible communications partners.

Procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods

Objective

Ensure that the procurement and materiel management team and project authorities consider accessibility requirements in their specifications for procuring services, goods, and services related to goods so that the deliverables provide the necessary accessibility features.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following six barriers in procurement services, goods, and services related to goods:

1. Involve persons with disabilities early in the procurement process.

2. Simplify the process for procuring the services of external service providers.

3. Ensure that supplier diversity information is available during the procurement process.

4. Ensure that templates and documents used in procurement processes are always accessible.

5. Consistently use accessibility assessment criteria in the evaluation process.

6. Streamline the accommodations process for suppliers.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to the procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Implement a mechanism for communicating the department's commitment to accessibility and information about the accommodations process to suppliers.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- The following information related to accessible procurement will be added to the department's web page to create awareness and encourage early consultations:

  o The Accessibility Hub (accessible only on the Government of Canada network):

    ▪ The hub's placemats and checklists provide tips and step-by-step guidance on incorporating accessibility into the procurement process.

  o Key contacts for business owners for the accessible procurement life cycle:

    ▪ The AAACT program develops accessibility requirements for ICT procurements and assists in evaluating accessibility requirements, including conformance testing for technical standards (EN 301 549 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)) and accessibility user testing.

- An Accessible Procurement Awareness Corner for the Accessible Procurement Toolkit and Quick Reference Guide is being considered.

Shorter-term commitment 2

Review the procurement process, including documents, forms, templates and communications, to ensure that accessible practices are reflected.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

Development and implementation of accessibility standards

- Ongoing work to develop best practices for accessible documents is being done to ensure that all procurement documents have a Word version to meet accessibility standards.

- Finance's Internal Communications team has been consulted to ensure that procurement forms meet accessibility standards.

- PSPC's draft Checklist for Contracting Authorities will be shared with Finance's procurement team for use when drafting requests for proposal (RFPs) and will be incorporated into Finace's procurement processes.

- Elements of the AAACT program's draft Statement of Work Template and Evaluation Criteria: Template for Accessibility Conformance Testers (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) (January 2024) have been incorporated into Finance's Statement of Work Template.

Accessibility resources and training

- Finance's procurement team has been provided with PSPC's Accessible Procurement: Standard Language (accessible only on the Government of Canada network) for procurement documents.

- Procurement team members have begun accessibility training to ensure that standards are met in day-to-day activities.

Client engagement and communication

- An active offer of accessible Word documents has been posted on Finance's web page.

- The PSPC Checklist for Contracting Authorities will be added to Finance's web page once finalized.

- Templates that have improved language on accessibility for selected sections of RFPs will be created with the support of PSPC templates.

- Clients are consistently encouraged to identify accessibility barriers for procuring goods and services.

- Clients are consistently encouraged to consider all aspects of accessibility in their:

  o statements of work for services

  o statements of requirement for goods and goods-related services

  o justifications

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to procurement of services, goods, and services related to goods.

Longer-term commitment 1

Provide the following to Finance's procurement team and project authorities:

- accessibility guidance on leading practices for accessible procurement

- accessibility guidance on interacting and communicating with suppliers with disabilities

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- In collaboration with the Accessible Procurement Resource Centre, Finance has drafted a standard language guide for including accessibility considerations in procurement documents. The guide can be changed to fit the needs of the procurement or commodity being procured.

- Finance has incorporated accessibility requirements for non-competitive and competitive request forms for project authorities to justify whether they have considered accessibility.

- As reported above, PSPC has recently shared its draft Checklist for Contracting Authorities, which will be shared with Finance's procurement team for drafting requests for proposals.

- As reported above, information related to accessible procurement will be added to Finance's web page to create awareness and encourage early consultations.

- As reported above, an Accessible Procurement Awareness Corner for the Accessible Procurement Toolkit and Quick Reference Guide is being considered.

Longer-term commitment 2

Consistently implement accessibility assessment criteria with project authorities as part of the evaluation of all procured goods and services.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- Finance will be implementing changes to improve considerations for accessibility in procurement guidance materials, following similar work published by PSPC.

- Finance has put in place reporting tools in the Systems, Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP) system. These tools will allow the department to track whether accessibility requirements are included in contracts and procurement processes.

Culture change toward disability inclusion

Objective

Accessibility is integrated into the everyday business of the Department of Finance Canada.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following four barriers for culture change toward disability inclusion:

1. Provide information and training, including unconscious bias training as it relates to accessibility.

2. Increase the representation of persons with disabilities at the management level.

3. Provide guidance, training and advance preparation to enable employees who provide policy advice on services to meet clients' accessibility needs.

4. Conduct consultations when designing accessible policies, services and programs.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to culture change toward disability inclusion.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion focused on knowledge-sharing to build a disability-confident workforce.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- Ongoing work with employees with disabilities is being done to better integrate the "Nothing Without Us" principle into the implementation of Finance's Accessibility Action Plan and everyday business practices.

- Finance's Accessibility Network has merged with the TBS Accessibility Network to become the TBS-FIN Accessibility Network. This innovative collaboration allows for greater support, representation and voice for Finance employees. Finance's Accessibility Network continues to be engaged apart from TBS in relevant consultative and engagement circumstances.

Shorter-term commitment 2

Leverage and strengthen departmental governance committees to foster culture change.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- An Accessibility Action Plan Committee was created that includes a steering committee with executive representatives responsible for each accessibility pillar and a working group. The committee meets regularly to discuss progress on accessibility in the workplace.

- The department has appointed co-champions for equity, diversity an inclusion. Departmental champions are empowered to lead their respective portfolios by setting out a vision and an agenda that addresses issues and improves the workplace environment by:

  o increasing engagement and awareness

  o undertaking supporting activities open to all employees

Shorter-term commitment 3

Create a working group consisting of employees with disabilities and accessibility pillar leads to:

- develop a results framework and implementation plan

- monitor progress

- advance accessibility awareness and engagement activities within the department

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 3:

- As reported above, an Accessibility Action Plan Committee was created that includes a steering committee with executive representatives responsible for each accessibility pillar and a working group. The committee meets regularly to discuss progress on accessibility in the workplace.

- As reported above, the TBS-FIN Accessibility Network was created to allow for greater support, representation and voice for Finance employees.

Shorter-term commitment 4

Create new tools and structures to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in providing internal and external services.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 4:

- As reported in the Employment section of this report, the department has onboarded an Accessibility Navigator to support the implementation of the Accessibility Action Plan and establish the Finance Accessibility Centre of Expertise (FACE) that will serve as a one-stop shop for accommodations.

- The TBS-FIN Accessibility Network in collaboration with Finance's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team continues to plan and execute multiple learning events on accessibility to raise awareness and share best practices.

- Examples of engagements include:

    o an information session with Infinity – the Network for Neurodivergent Public Servants – for National AccessAbility Week

    o a keynote address and question-and-answer session with a leader in accessibility from TD Bank

    o a meeting with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to culture change toward disability inclusion.

Longer-term commitment 1

Raise awareness about the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act* to realize a barrier-free Canada, culture change, standards development, and monitoring and reporting.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- Ongoing efforts are being made to create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion through:

    o presentations at various committees or bodies

    o learning and awareness events on accessibility, sharing resources, initiatives and best practice

- Activities including awareness building and networking events for the National AccessAbility Week, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and International Day of Persons with Disabilities. These events included collaboration with internal and external partners, including Infinity – the Network for Neurodivergent Public Servants –LiveWorkPlay and TD Bank, among others.

- There is continued promotion of upcoming departmental and interdepartmental special events to bring awareness to accessibility.

- Ongoing training on bias and barriers, inclusion and accessibility is provided to employees and managers.

Longer-term commitment 2

Work with employees with disabilities to better integrate the "Nothing Without Us" principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 2:

- As reported above, ongoing work with employees with disabilities and the TBS-FIN Accessibility Network is being done to better integrate the "Nothing Without Us" principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices.

- Information on consultation best practices will be shared broadly within the department to promote the need to involve employment equity groups such as persons with disabilities in initiatives and programs at early stages to enable inclusive design.

- Ongoing work with the human resources unit is being done to find ways to extend employment opportunities to persons with disabilities via entities such as LiveWorkPlay.

Transportation

Objective

The transportation pillar was not included in the Department of Finance Canada Accessibility Plan 2022–25; however, the department recognizes its importance to all employees who travel as part of their work responsibilities. The department is committed to ensuring that all accessibility requirements for employees and managers are met when employees travel for business.

Key barriers: areas for improvement

The department identified the following two barriers in transportation:

1. Employees travelling for business are not guaranteed accessible hotels and other venues due to differences in international standards and age of buildings in certain locations around the world.

2. Travelling employees from other departments have come across major barriers when travelling by air and other methods of transportation.

In an effort to address barriers and meet all shorter- and longer-term commitments for the transportation pillar, the department has appointed an executive Pillar Lead. The Pillar Lead is part of the Accessibility Action Plan Committee steering committee and will oversee progress for the following commitments.

Shorter-term commitments (2024)

The department identified the following shorter-term commitments to remove barriers to transportation.

Shorter-term commitment 1

Review current policies and guidance regarding travel and survey employees with disabilities to find and address any and all barriers they encounter during their travel for work.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 1:

- Employees who travel often for work will be consulted (by survey or interview) to find out their needs and what barriers they come across while travelling for work.

- Ongoing identification of possible opportunities for collaboration with intradepartmental teams to align progress and initiatives on improving accessibility as it relates to departmental policies and guidelines.

Shorter-term commitment 2

The use of the AccessNow app and other accessibility tools, apps and websites will assist in making future recommendations for hotels, restaurants, transportation and other venues for travelling employees in advance of their trip.

The following steps were taken to meet shorter-term commitment 2:

- Communicate and promote the use of the AccessNow app to employees responsible for booking and coordinating travel.

- There has been ongoing identification of opportunities to provide an active offer of accommodation to travelling employees to encourage a safe environment for requesting accommodations.

- There has been ongoing promotion of the use of the AccessNow app to employees as an adaptive tool during their travel.

Longer-term commitments (2024–25)

The department identified the following longer-term commitments to remove barriers to transportation.

Longer-term commitment 1

Ensure that employers and employees are aware of rights and responsibilities regarding the duty to accommodate, which may apply when employees travel for work.

The following steps were taken to meet longer-term commitment 1:

- Communications will be shared throughout the department to inform managers and employees of their rights and responsibilities regarding accommodations in the workplace that may apply when employees are travelling for work.

- Include information about workplace accommodations during travel when providing training and programs on accessibility.

- Review and share a list of nationally and internationally approved hotels, including their level of accessibility.

Although the department is unable to control how private sector transportation and hotel companies are set up for all accessibility needs, the department will ensure that all employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding the duty to accommodate.

Consultations

A co-development model inspired the approach for drafting this progress report. The Finance Accessibility Network, formed in 2022, facilitated experience-based conversations and was provided the opportunity to comment throughout the report's development.

Following the publication of its Accessibility Action Plan, the department continues to consult with the Finance Accessibility Network and ensures that persons with disabilities contribute to all decision-making related to the commitments made in the plan.

As was committed to in the plan, progress reports and future action plans have been guided by the principle of "Nothing Without Us," recognizing that persons with disabilities will guide efforts to build an inclusive federal public service that is more innovative, efficient and productive.

Finance Accessibility Network

The Finance Accessibility Network was consulted throughout the development of the 2024 progress report using the following methods:

1. Pre-draft: written consultation

Network members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on what should be considered during the early drafting stages of the department's progress report. The following consultation questions were provided to help guide input:

- What improvements have you observed in the department's accessibility since the last progress report?

- Do the shorter- and longer-term goals identified in the progress report reflect the needs within the department?

  - If not, what would you suggest the shorter- and long-term goals should be for improving accessibility?

- Have you witnessed positive examples of accessibility-related adjustments or improvements that could be highlighted in the report?

- Are there any existing policies or procedures related to accessibility that are working particularly well?

- Are there any success stories or data points you think should be included in the report to showcase our progress?

- Are there any areas where progress has been slower than expected or where challenges remain unaddressed?

- Are there specific initiatives or projects you would recommend we focus on in the next phase of our accessibility strategy?

2. Post-draft consultation session

After the written feedback was incorporated into the progress report, the Finance Accessibility Network was invited to a virtual consultation session.[2] This session served as an alternative format to provide verbal feedback and answer any remaining questions or comments. The following consultation questions were provided to help guide any input:

- What improvements have you observed in the department's accessibility since the last progress report?

- Do the identified barriers and commitments outlined in the accessibility progress report reflect the needs of the department?

3. Post-draft written consultation

After the consultation session, a follow-up email was sent to Finance Accessibility Network members with the opportunity to provide written feedback on the draft.

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[2] An active offer of accommodation was sent to members in advance of the meeting to ensure that the meeting was accessible to all participants.

Accessibility Action Plan Committee

The Accessibility Action Plan Committee was also consulted throughout the development of this progress report.

The committee includes a steering committee that includes four directors general and one associate assistant deputy minister from the department who are accountable for one or more of the seven accessibility pillars. The committee also includes a working group of managers and employees that fall under the pillar leads.

The committee is responsible for the following:

- providing insight and expertise in relation to their professional and lived experience

- tracking and measuring progress in accessibility

- ensuring that the department is compliant with the *Accessible Canada Act*

Consultations with the committee throughout the development of the 2024 progress report included the following methods:

1. Pre-draft: written consultation

Before the progress report was developed, the committee was asked to provide written reports of progress on the Accessibility Action Plan commitments for the pillars they lead or support.

2. Pre-draft: consultation session

A hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting was held with the committee to discuss any feedback or additional input required for reporting on their respective pillars.

3. Post-draft: consultation session

A hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting was held with the committee after the progress report was drafted to discuss any feedback or comments members may have on the report.

All feedback was taken into consideration and/or incorporated into subsequent iterations of the report.

Feedback

The consultations leading up to the publication of the progress report focused on listening to accounts of personal and professional experience. In these messages, some common themes emerged over time:

- There were improvements to overall workplace culture and attitudes toward accessibility.

- There is a stronger emphasis on top-down prioritization and support for accessibility.

- There is support for the creation of a digitized GC Workplace Accessibility Passport.

- There has been a shift toward practical approaches that focus on employee success rather than traditional work methods.

- There is increased awareness and education about the accessibility services and tools available within the department.

- There is a need to raise awareness of accessibility tools and supports for management.

- Accessible evacuation practices have improved.

- There is more information and support for managers and employees regarding accommodations and accessibility while travelling for work.

Key commitments moving forward (2024–25)

Following feedback from consultations and commitments outlined in the department's Accessibility Action Plan, the key commitments listed below have been identified as a priority:

Awareness and culture change

- Raise awareness about the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*, including the realization of a barrier-free Canada, culture change, standards development, and monitoring and reporting.

- Create opportunities for dialogue on accessibility and disability inclusion focused on knowledge-sharing to build a disability-confident workforce. Leverage and strengthen departmental governance committees to foster culture change.

- Promote awareness of existing accessibility services and tools available to employees.

Implementation and integration

- Work with employees with disabilities to better integrate the "Nothing Without Us" principle into the implementation of an action plan and everyday business practices, including emergency procedures.

- Leverage the Accessibility Action Plan Committee to develop a results framework and implementation plan, monitor progress, and advance accessibility awareness and engagement in the department.

- Collaborate with the Office of Public Service Accessibility to promote and implement the digital GC Workplace Accessibility Passport following its launch, providing training and tools for employees and managers to effectively use in the department.

Tools and support

- Create new tools and structures to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in providing internal and external services.

- Continue implementation of flexible work arrangements and adaptive technologies to support employee's success in the workplace.

Glossary

accessibility

The degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all.

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 equipment or tools

- flexible work hours or job-sharing

- relocation of the workspace

- 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 longer-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace.

barrier

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal. (Source: Bill C-81: *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*)

disability

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: Bill C-81: *An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada*)

disability type

A form of limitation, be it physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory or other. In its 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada used screening questions to identify the following 10 types of disability:

1. seeing

2. hearing

3. mobility

4. flexibility

5. dexterity

6. pain-related

7. learning

8. developmental

9. mental health–related

10. memory

The screening questionnaire also contained a question concerning any other health problem or condition that has lasted or is expected to last for six months or more. This question was meant to be a catch-all type in case the 10 disability types did not cover the respondent's situation. This question is associated with an 11th "unknown" disability type.

employee

A person employed by the Department of Finance Canada.

persons with disabilities

Persons who have a longer-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who:

a. consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or

b. believe that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment

Persons with disabilities include persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace. (Source: *Employment Equity Act*)

self-identification

Employees providing employment equity information for statistical purposes in analyzing and monitoring the progress of employment equity groups in the federal public service and for reporting on workforce representation. (Source: *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018*)

workforce availability

For the core public administration, refers to the estimated availability of people in designated groups as a percentage of the workforce population. For the core public administration, workforce availability is based on the population of Canadian citizens who are active in the workforce and work in those occupations that correspond to the occupations in the core public administration. Availability is estimated from 2011 Census data. Estimates for persons with disabilities are derived from data, also collected by Statistics Canada, in the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. (Source: *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018*)