

2024

Health Canada Accessibility Progress Report



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Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health. Health Canada is committed to improving the lives of all of Canada's people and to making this country's population among the healthiest in the world as measured by longevity, lifestyle and effective use of the public health care system.

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Foreword

Message from the Deputy Ministers

Health Canada is pleased to share our second Accessibility Progress Report. This report outlines the progress made during year two of the Health Canada 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan and builds on the progress and the lessons learned from year one. Accessibility is essential to ensure that all the people of Canada can fully take part in society through barrier-free communities, workplaces, and services. When we make these areas accessible, we open the door to valuable contributions and perspectives that benefit us all. The Department is committed to improving the lives of all people living in Canada and continues to take action to meet its responsibility as part of the Government of Canada’s goals to make Canada barrier free by 2040.

In this report, you will learn about the targets met, the initiatives in progress, and new initiatives underway. Health Canada’s work to become barrier free is dependent on collaboration, consultation, and feedback from persons with disabilities, the Health Canada Persons with Disabilities Network, and program partners. The input from their lived experiences is invaluable to the department and our progress towards addressing and removing barriers to accessibility.

We encourage you to read this year’s Progress Report and share your thoughts or feedback with us as we move towards a barrier-free Canada.

Thank you,

Greg Orencsak (he/him)
Deputy Minister, Health Canada

Eric Costen (he/him)
Associate Deputy Minister, Health Canada

About Health Canada

Health Canada (HC) is the federal department responsible for helping Canadians maintain and improve their health. It ensures that high-quality health services are accessible and works to reduce health risks. [HC's mandate](#) is available on the HC website.

General

The HC Accessibility Readiness Team (ART) drafts and publishes the Accessibility Plan, and reports on the feedback received and progress made in its implementation, in accordance with regulations under the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and direction provided in the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#). ART is part of the Talent and Workplace Culture Directorate within the Corporate Services Branch.

To request a copy of this Progress Report, the [2022–2025 Accessibility Plan](#), or a description of the feedback tool in an alternate format, or to provide feedback, please contact the Director of ART, in one of the following ways:

Contact: Director of Accessibility Readiness Team

Mail: Health Canada Accessibility Feedback
70 Columbine Dr; Brooke Claxton Building
Address Locator 0907D
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

Email: art-epa@hc-sc.gc.ca

Toll free telephone: 1-833-725-2751

Teletypewriter: 1-800-465-7735 (Service Canada)

In 2022, HC launched a tool to collect, receive, acknowledge, and address feedback about accessibility. Internal processes are also in place to monitor, report on, and incorporate the feedback related to accessibility barriers. Feedback received will be acknowledged in the same manner in which it was received, unless it was submitted anonymously.

To submit feedback related to the Plan, the Progress Reports, the feedback tool or about any barriers faced when interacting with HC, please visit the [Accessibility Feedback Form](#) page.

Summary

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) requires all organisations under federal responsibility to publish an Accessibility Plan every three years that outlines how they will identify, remove and prevent barriers in their policies, programs, and services. A Progress Report, outlining progress made towards meeting HC's actions to removing barriers, must be published annually. This is HC's second Progress Report, and it continues the progress made in removing barriers in the eight priority areas listed in the [Accessibility Plan](#).

In keeping with the [Accessibility Strategy](#) for the Public Service of Canada, which aims to build the Public Service into a model of an inclusive and accessible employer, HC worked closely with the Offices of Primary Interest (OPIs) and the Persons with Disabilities Network (PWDN) to identify realistic and achievable actions to address barriers. Key themes from these consultations included access to training, mentorship, subject matter expertise, and building on previous progress to further remove barriers.

HC has a means for employees and Canadians to share feedback on barriers faced when interacting with the Department or on the HC Accessibility Plan. Due to the legislated deadline for publication, the first progress report included feedback received in the first eight months of 2023. This second report includes the last four months of 2023 and the first eight months of 2024. HC uses the feedback and suggestions for improvement received for each of the eight priority areas to guide its work to improve accessibility in the workplace and within its policies, programs, and services. The feedback also guides the development and implementation of the next Accessibility Plan.

Areas in Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act

In early 2024, ART held its second round of consultations with the PWDN on each of the eight priority areas to review and seek feedback on proposed activities. Through these consultations, and input received from the feedback tool, HC committed to designing, experimenting with and innovating realistic and achievable activities for the first year. These activities have been sustained and continue to progress, with some already completed. Others have evolved from development to implementation and monitoring, while new initiatives have also been introduced. This report outlines the achievements to date.

Employment

HC's employment objective is centered on ensuring access to jobs and long-term career prospects for persons with disabilities. Commitments focused on working collaboratively with stakeholders on inclusive and accessible staffing approaches, enhancing the recruitment experience of persons with disabilities and managers alike, and providing an accessible and barrier-free workplace to enable career success and progression for employees with disabilities. In addition, the biennial Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results guide the work for all priority areas of accessibility and will be used to measure Departmental progress in achieving the goals and commitments outlined in the Accessibility Plan. The PSES is a critical tool that provides information to help improve people management practices in the federal public service.

Commitment: Working with the HC PWDN and key disability stakeholders, revise staffing and assessment tools, approaches and resources to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

- All managers must complete the Public Service Commission's (PSC) Tool to Mitigating Biases and Barriers in Assessments for all advertised staffing processes. Managers can use this tool for non-advertised processes or choose the "All-In-One Non-Advertised Appointment Form," an in-house option for non-advertised processes. The tool helps managers review their assessment methods to find and reduce biases or barriers, ensuring fair assessments. While it's not required for non-merit-based appointments, managers are encouraged, as part of their sub-delegation training, to apply these principles when hiring casuals, students, and other non-merit-based hires. Staffing Advisors are also trained on these tools and assist by reviewing both the assessment tools and the manager's evaluation form before they are finalized.

- The use of the Attestation of Impartiality Diversity Form (AIDF) is an ongoing requirement for all advertised processes and is included in the Manager's Staffing Checklist. To date, 100% of board members in monitored staffing processes have completed the form.
- The Staffing Policy Centre has reviewed its staffing and assessment tools and policies to ensure they follow accessibility content and format, including bulletins, presentations, and staffing checklists, and amended as needed in order to ensure the content is accessible. For specialized recruitment processes, feedback from employee networks was solicited to ensure Statement of Merit Criteria forms and assessment materials were inclusive and barrier free. Significant changes were incorporated into the final documents based on comments received. Network Chairs were also invited to participate in assessment boards. The collaboration process with the networks has been positive and effective.

Commitment: Support managers in meeting or exceeding HC hiring targets using an enhanced recruitment experience.

- The Persons with Disabilities Specialized Recruitment team continues to support HC with enhanced service delivery to supply managers with candidates and ease the administrative burden of external hiring. To date in fiscal year 2024–25, the department has hired 34 out of the target of 65 net new hires, representing 52% of the target. This continues the achievement of fiscal year 2023–24 which saw the department hire 144 net new staff members, exceeding its target of 116.

Commitment: Enable career success and progression of employees with disabilities through onboarding, training, access to accommodations, talent management and mentorship.

- HC has continued to add more resources to support career mobility for employees with disabilities. The Mentorship Plus Program successfully matched 86% (31 matched, five unmatched) of employees with disabilities seeking mentorship or sponsorship. This program offers one-on-one advice on career development and workplace challenges for mentees and protégés with disabilities.

Did You Know?

The National Joint Council (NJC) invited HC as a keynote speaker to the 2024 NJC Seminar, where the theme was Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility. The NJC is a partnership of government and union representatives who work together to improve the public service workplace. HC highlighted its experience establishing the Accessibility Centre of Expertise, including lessons learned, best practices and actionable items participants could use to improve accessibility within their organizations.

The Built Environment

HC is working to modernize all physical spaces to meet or exceed accessibility standards by 2040. With public servants increasing their time in the office, this includes collaboration with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) regarding new facility accessible fit-ups and new construction; as well as engaging with internal and external stakeholders to identify and remove any barriers.

Commitment: Work with PSPC to ensure that all new facility fit-ups/construction are accessible; implement an assessment process for existing facilities to identify potential accessibility upgrades to be incorporated into planned/future projects.

HC remains committed to ensuring that all new facility fit-ups/construction result in a more accessible workplace.

- New Facility Projects and Renovations: The Office Accommodation Project Advisory Committee ensured that all four of four new facility fit-ups and construction projects aligned with accessibility standards as part of 2024-25 fiscal year planning.
- Existing Facilities: HC began work with PSPC to review the accessibility of its occupied spaces. This ongoing work will identify areas where accessibility can be improved through Accessibility Condition Reviews.

Commitment: Continuously engage internal and external stakeholders to identify and remove barriers to the built environment and use innovative or novel technologies to support accessibility.

- Employee feedback continues to play a key role in advancing efforts to remove barriers in HC workplaces. Client service portals remain a valuable tool for employees to report accessibility challenges in the workplace. The Portal received two applicable feedback submissions this fiscal year about the availability of client lockers in the workplace, and accessibility features on secure doors (such as automatic buttons and card readers). The Office of Primary Interest (OPI) is investigating and considering this feedback.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

The ICT Accessibility Team, within the Digital Transformation Branch (DTB) at HC is committed to strengthening the level of accessibility of new systems and applications for all users, improving support for the development and procurement of new software, and promoting accessibility awareness. The Team continues to collaborate with branches by educating employees on the requirements for websites and training for developers. The Team is also strengthening internal policies and procedures to support accessible ICT.

Commitment: Strengthen the current level of accessibility of ICT at HC by continuing to ensure new (internal and public facing) systems, including internally developed or procured hardware and software, meet modern accessibility standards.

- As of August 19, 2024, the Chief Information Officer (CIO) signed 16 Accessibility Impact Assessments (AIA) for newly released applications. There are currently an additional seven applications being routed for signatures. AIAs outline risks and issues and provide a recommendation on implementation to the CIO.
- An updated Directive for Software Procurement and use of Software Tools and Services was brought to the Chief Information Office Committee (CIOC) in August 2024 for approval. The new process and directive include requirements for accessibility.
- DTB is updating its software standards, beginning with the development tools commonly used across the organization. The updated standards will ensure that IT security and accessibility requirements are fully addressed before designating any products as ready to use.

Commitment: Improve accessibility support (guidance and advice) to users in the development and procurement and acquisition of new software.

- Eleven information sessions were held on the requirement of accessibility in the procurement and acquisition of new software.
- Five new students and one term employee were hired in April 2024 and have been trained to assist with accessibility testing for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Commitment: Promote accessibility awareness across the Department by providing training and raising awareness to foster an accessibility-first mindset for all IT projects.

- Mandatory training courses for senior management have been implemented on a trial basis at the directorate level for the fiscal year 2024–25. The next phase will extend to the branch level, allowing more employees to access this important training.
- Three Screen Reader Workshops (two English, one French) have been held since April 2024. English sessions had an average of 14 attendees and 12 attended the French session.
- A service catalogue for accessibility training is being created and will be shared across HC in February 2025.

Commitment: Strengthen the accessibility governance and process by developing internal policies and procedures for accessible ICT.

- The ICT Accessibility Committee was created and has representation from each branch. This committee will contribute to a strategy for hardware/software to address gaps in accessibility, along with the ICT Lead and the Accessibility Centre of Expertise.

Communication, other than ICT

HC envisions an environment where everyone can readily access and understand communication materials; this means that content is accessible by default, wherever possible. To that end, HC is committed to providing products and organizing events in accessible formats.

Commitment: Ensure HC external digital content and new internal digital content are accessible by default.

HC has made significant strides in ensuring both internal and external digital content meets accessibility standards, focusing on usability and inclusivity:

- The Communications and Public Affairs Branch (CPAB) delivered seven plain language training sessions to HC programs and branches. CPAB also held a session on user experience and accessibility for the Young Professionals Network.
- The intranet team upgraded the site technology and redesigned its templates enhancing compliance with usability and accessibility standards.

Did You Know?

Assistive Technology (AT) can't solve all digital technology issues. While AT such as screen readers and voice to text tools are helpful, they only work when websites are developed with accessibility in mind. AT and accessible design must work together for full inclusion for users.

Commitment: Provide Departmental communications products and events in accessible formats.

HC has taken important steps to ensure that departmental communications products and events were accessible to all, with a focus on inclusive formats and services.

- Internal Communications produced several accessible items:
 - » 31 employee messages;
 - » three newsletters; and
 - » three townhall events for employees with closed captioning and simultaneous interpretation of English, French, ASL and LSQ.
- Closed Captions were provided for 100% of all internally produced videos posted on the [Canada.ca video gallery](#), [YouTube channel](#), [X](#), and [Facebook](#). Described Video versions were added when required (all videos produced internally were reviewed to determine this requirement). While sign language versions were not yet available, web-equivalent information was consistently provided.
- HC created Accessible Microsoft (MS) Word and PowerPoint templates with the new corporate look, along with instructions for making documents accessible. These resources are now available to all employees through the intranet and Office 365.
- Creative Services followed accessibility best practices by using departmental resources and checklists. These tools were also promoted to their internal clients.
- HC supported 60 Ministerial events between September 2023 and August 2024. The organization provided simultaneous interpretation (SI) and sign language for one out of four qualifying events, where planning timelines and availability of service providers allowed. SI was provided for all four press conferences and technical briefings held at the National Press Theatre.
- Efforts to improve accessibility in Deputy Minister communications—through emails, newsletters, town halls, and other platforms—were fully implemented, with 100% of initiatives meeting accessibility standards. Collaboration with the Internal Communications Advisory Network and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office has further promoted accessible practices at the Branch and Network level.

The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Implementing modern procurement practices for accessible goods, services, and facilities is the objective. HC is committed to incorporating accessibility into processes and documents, as well as increasing awareness of accessibility through training and guidance.

Commitment: Incorporate accessibility into procurement and contracting documents, templates, and guidance.

- HC has completed its first review of five internal procurement tools and templates to ensure accessibility. Updated, accessible versions have been implemented, and new documents and guidance have been created to meet recent Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) policy changes, such as conflict of interest declarations. This ongoing work reflects the department's commitment to maintaining accessible documents, templates, and guidance.

Commitment: Increase awareness amongst procurement officers and cost center managers to consider accessibility from the start of a procurement process through training, information sessions, or guidance documentation.

- HC ensures that accessibility is considered from the start of the procurement process. To achieve this, the department has made accessibility training mandatory for Procurement Officers as part of their job performance. These officers are also participating in Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) Agents of Change for Accessible Procurement network. Additionally, HC is updating the Procurement Operations intranet site to include important accessibility resources from PSPC and HC internal forums.

Did You Know?

Health Canada Procurement Officers are mandated to attend training jointly provided by PSPC's Accessible Procurement Resource Centre and Shared Services Canada's (SSC) Accessibility, Accommodation, and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) program.

The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

HC's objective is that programs and services are accessible and designed in consultation with persons with disabilities. HC committed to building internal capacity to better design and deliver accessible programs and services.

Commitment: Build capacity to consult, develop, design, deliver and evaluate accessible and inclusive programs and services.

- ART identified nearly 270 services delivered by HC and created a distribution list of programs and services leads with 288 contacts. ART received a 97% response rate upon asking all HC directorates to confirm their services and identify at least one lead for each. With no central office for programs and services at HC, this distribution list keeps leads across the Department connected, and bridges gaps in knowledge of how to make services accessible. ART sends a bi-monthly newsletter to this distribution list—which began in April 2024—and the list is the basis for the Accessible Programs and Services Community of Practice (P&S CoP) membership.
- The purpose of the quarterly P&S CoP is to facilitate knowledge sharing, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving related to accessibility. The CoP held its inaugural meeting on June 19, 2024, with over 70 participants, including from the HC PWDN. Important topics were discussed including hosting accessible meetings, and empowering inclusion through accessibility.
- ART launched the MS Team for the P&S CoP in August 2024, which serves as a forum where members can connect, ask questions, access meeting materials, presentation recordings, and more.

Commitment: Integrate accessibility features into new and existing programs and services.

- HC is incorporating accessibility-related considerations into Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) and Treasury Board (TB) submissions. This year, the first step was to make the MC and TB submission process more accessible for employees by completing accessibility reviews of templates and documents (e.g.: attestation forms). Attestation groups shared their templates and documents used for MC and TB submissions with ART, who undertook an accessibility review of the documents. ART reviewed four templates and provided guidance to improve accessibility.

- ART is part of the [Accessibility Standards Canada](#) Technical Committee for Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services. Participating in committees responsible for developing standards is important for identifying and addressing common accessibility barriers experienced by persons with disabilities. The outcomes will help develop national standards to ensure equitable and accessible programs and service delivery to all Canadians.

Transportation

Assessing accessibility requirements for HC fleet vehicles, focusing on current and future accessibility standards, and ensuring fleet purchases meet the standards are HC priorities in the Accessibility Plan.

Commitment: Identify any potential accessibility features available that can be included in new fleet vehicle acquisitions.

- Work was completed to determine and evaluate potential accessibility features that may be available for inclusion in new fleet vehicle acquisition. Employee input and experience has been key in identifying the most valuable accessibility features that could be considered for fleet vehicle acquisition. As accessibility barriers are individual in nature, the lines of communication remain open with the PWDN to continue to consider accessible feature input for fleet vehicles.

Did You Know?

HCs Office of Grants and Contributions and the Healthy Environment and Consumer Safety Branch (HECSB) have each developed their own Accessibility Action Plans. These plans help drive progress in delivering accessible programs and services and creating an inclusive workplace. For the Office of Grants and Contributions, one action taken includes engaging funding recipients to review their accessibility policies and raise their awareness around accessibility requirements of HC projects. HECSB has committed to improving the accessibility of stakeholder and partner meetings by offering captions, recordings, transcripts and simultaneous translation.

Commitment: Implement any new accessibility standards relating to fleet vehicles as prescribed by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) and PSPC.

- HC continues to support PSPC/TBS as they review fleet accessibility standards.

Culture

HC envisions a workplace culture that supports all persons with disabilities, proactively eliminates and prevents barriers, and creates greater opportunities for persons with disabilities through a “Nothing Without Us” approach. As a priority area in the 2022–2025 Accessibility Plan, HC committed to promoting an accessibility-informed culture and work environment through outreach, communication and training. The Department also committed to supporting all HC employees so that they have the knowledge and tools to become accessibility-confident.

Commitment: Promote an accessibility-informed culture that creates a positive, inclusive workplace.

- As part of HC’s internal accessibility communications and engagement plan, employee networks were offered a presentation on accessibility progress to date. These presentations included a call to action and provided resources for staff to enhance their knowledge. The presentations were also available to branches and directorates, by request. ART reached 636 participants between March and June 2024.
- The first quarterly Accessibility Newsletter was emailed to all staff in May 2024 to coincide with National AccessAbility Week. The newsletter provides employees with tips and best practices, spotlights the ongoing work by the OPIs and branches and clears up some common myths about accessibility. The second issue was sent in September to tie into the International Day of Sign Languages.
- Starting in 2023, ART became the Departmental lead for the annual HC International Day for Persons with Disabilities event. For the 2023 event, ART collaborated with the HC PWDN to host *Culture Change in the Workplace*. The guest speaker, Aria Mia Loberti, an actor from the Netflix series *All the Light We Cannot See*, shared her experiences as a person with a disability, the workplace barriers she encountered, and how to foster a more inclusive environment. The event was well-received, attracting nearly 1,500 attendees. A recording is available on the Accessibility Hub (intranet) and has 264 views to date.

Commitment: Ensure all HC employees have the knowledge and tools to become accessibility confident through training and engagement.

- The Accessibility Hub on the intranet, is regularly updated with events, resources and tools. The Hub acts as a central resource for employees to share feedback on workplace barriers, learn about best practices, and find ways to advance accessibility in the workplace. The Office of Public Service Accessibility's (OPSA) 2024 Accessibility Progress Report Analysis recognized HC for creating the Accessibility Hub and for launching an icon on employee's desktops to link directly to it. These initiatives were highlighted as strong examples of advancing accessibility, which other Government of Canada organizations may want to adopt. Many federal organizations have shown interest in these activities and have contacted to ART for more information.
- The HC Report on the Clerk's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service Q3 and Q4 of 2023–2024 also highlighted the Accessibility Hub and desktop icon. This recognition reflects HC's commitment to advancing accessibility and strengthening inclusion in the workplace.
- An Employee Accessibility Playbook was posted to the intranet in June 2024. This practical guide offers tips and actionable plays to help employees pivot and adapt to change as HC moves towards the goal of a barrier free workplace. The Playbook is evergreen and will be revised as the Government updates its accessibility standards.
- The accessibility chatbot is a new initiative proposed by ART to advance accessibility. It would exist on the intranet and would allow employees to ask accessibility related questions. ART has gathered and created many accessibility resources for employees, and a chatbot would help employees to navigate them. ART is working with the Office of the Chief Data Officer (OCDO) to explore the feasibility of this project.
- In 2024, ART launched a series of events called Diverse Perspectives of Employees with Disabilities, where employees with disabilities share their experiences on life in the workplace. There have been three sessions in 2024, each with over 80 participants. Feedback has been positive, with high engagement from attendees. All sessions were recorded and shared on the Accessibility Hub. ASL and LSQ interpreters are provided at all ART events.

Consultations

In 2024, HC continued its collaboration with the HC PWDN, reinforcing its commitment to an inclusive approach.

Departmental efforts to address accessibility barriers continued to be guided by consultations with persons with disabilities. In the second year of the implementation of HC's Accessibility Plan, there were a series of consultations and touchpoints, for example:

- ART and the HC PWDN continued to meet monthly to advance common goals and objectives, to gather feedback, and to outline and solidify engagement opportunities.
- ART continued to host a monthly director-level Forum for the PWDN and OPIs to collaborate, advance commitments and provide feedback.
- The PWDN executive actively participated in various corporate working groups focussed on accessibility.
- ART delivered consultation sessions on the second draft implementation plan, which outlines updated activities to meet the commitments in the Accessibility Plan as well as indicators to measure progress, to capture and address feedback on possible barriers, including activity measurement.
 - » Attendees were provided with the draft working document in advance of the consultation sessions; they were encouraged to submit feedback via their preferred medium of choice.
- The governance approval process for the publication of this report included the PWDN executive committee.

Themes that emerged in 2024 centered on knowledge about accessibility; including training, employee engagement, and mentoring, as well as technology, and building on previous progress, to further remove barriers. HC recognizes that addressing barriers is an ongoing process and is key to developing accessibility competences, future commitments, and activities.

Did You Know?

In developing new products for target audiences, accessibility requirements are incorporated into project contracts. An example of this is [The Unit](#)—a graphic novel for Indigenous youth about wildfire smoke, air quality and health. The graphic novel was developed by the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth and is available in English and French, as .pdfs, and as videos with closed captions. This project was led by HC's Air Quality program specialists and supported by Water and Air Quality Bureau outreach and science staff.

External Consultations

Consultations with external stakeholders have been underway since summer 2024, in advance of drafting HC's next Accessibility Plan. ART has met with representatives from Canadian organisations that support people with disabilities. These consultations identify barriers that people with disabilities may encounter when interacting with HC. Organizations were chosen to reflect the diverse experiences of Canadians with different disabilities. HC will continue to hear from Canadians through an online questionnaire that will be made available to the public in 2025. This collaboration helps the department better understand accessibility challenges and helps it to work towards creating a more inclusive and accessible environment.

Health Canada Persons with Disabilities Network

HC has a very active and passionate persons with disabilities employee network, which plays an important role in building community and raising awareness of accessibility needs and supports an inclusive culture. The PWDN consists of a full-time Chair, a Vice-Chair, and six employees on the Executive Committee who each dedicate five hours per week towards Network activities. They also have two part-time students.

The HC PWDN works closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) PWDN to help advance accessibility within both organizations. They hold monthly listening sessions to hear from employees on challenges and objectives they'd like the networks to address.

The HC PWDN organized nine events in 2023–24, including for National Disability Awareness Month in October and National AccessAbility Week. They also collaborated with the HC Gender and Sexual Diversity Network on an event highlighting the intersection of disability, gender and sexual diversity. These events helped raise awareness for managers and employees on challenges faced by the persons with disabilities community and highlighted best practices for supporting employees.

The HC PWDN has hired a career navigator to help improve career mobility outcomes for people with disabilities. This navigator helps with career advancement by offering coaching through the application and interview process, as well as by connecting candidates to managers with open positions. The Network also sends out biweekly accessibility newsletters and has launched a MS Teams channel for members and allies.

The PWDN is crucial in advancing accessibility within HC. Their expert advice is indispensable for the Department to meet accessibility commitments and objectives.

Accessibility Steering Committee

The Accessibility Steering Committee (ASC) is a forum comprised of senior executives from both HC and PHAC, as well as the PWDN Chairs and Champions. The ASC oversees, supports and provides guidance on the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act* and the Accessibility Plans to advance accessibility within both organizations. Chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Corporate Services Branch, this committee provides feedback to the Accessibility Centre of Expertise while the members provide accessibility-related leadership within their branches.

Feedback

Employees and the public can submit feedback to HC via online feedback forms, telephone, teletype and by email to ART. These feedback channels offer an opportunity to share experiences when interacting with the Department, or to comment on the HC Accessibility Plan or progress reports. For this progress report HC analyzed feedback received from September 1st, 2023 to August 31st, 2024. This feedback is integral in guiding the development and implementation of the next Accessibility Plan.

How Feedback was Collected

HC has two feedback processes which are monitored and triaged by ART: one for the public on the [HC Accessibility Feedback web page](#), and a separate one for employees on the intranet.

To raise public awareness about the different ways to provide accessibility feedback, HC conducted social media campaigns in October 2023, January 2024, and May 2024, on the department's [Healthy Canadian's Facebook](#) page, [LinkedIn](#) and [X accounts](#).

HC promoted the internal feedback tool in the department's news bulletin, during events, and through messaging on the internal Health Television broadcasting system in 15 offices across Canada. Employees can also share accessibility feedback through other program or internal service providers (such as the HC Accessibility Service Centre). This feedback is shared with ART for awareness and action. HC is committed to collaborating with partners to identify and implement effective solutions that will advance accessibility.

What We Heard

For this reporting period, HC received a total of 20 accessibility feedback submissions and each identifiable accessibility barrier was tagged by priority area. HC also received submissions which were unrelated to accessibility barriers (for example, comments about the efficacy of vaccines) and therefore, were not included in this count.

From the 20 individual feedback submission, 15 were from HC employees and five were from the public. All the feedback was sent via email or the online forms. The breakdown of the number of barriers per priority area is shown in the table below.

Barriers identified by priority area

Pillar	Number of Barriers Identified
Employment	4
Built Environment	4
Information Technologies	6
Communication	3
Procurement	1
Transportation	0
Programs and Services	0
Culture	2
Total	20

ART shared all the feedback received with the appropriate OPIs. Below is a summary of key themes identified as barriers for each priority area and commitments to address the barriers.

Employment

HC is committed to building and supporting a diverse, accessible and inclusive workplace. The comments about employment barriers were reviewed and grouped into the following themes:

- Limited career advancement.
- Inaccessible hiring processes for employees with an invisible disability.
- Lack of information about how the return to the office and the hybrid work will affect accessibility.

Actions:

- Support the HC PWDN to establish a HC Career Navigator role for employees with disabilities.
- Leverage the Human Resources (HR) Data Hub to support evidence-based decisions when developing strategies that align with the [Government of Canada's Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities](#).
- Build awareness about the Government of Canada's initiatives to support career progression via [Mentorship Plus](#), the [Mosaic Leadership Development Program](#), and the [Equitable Access to Language Training Program](#).
- Implement the Government of Canada's [Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace](#) and [Common Hybrid Work Model](#), in a manner which creates a barrier-free public service according to the requirements under the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and its regulations.
- HC has developed guidance for managers to support conversations with employees about the prescribed presence on the return to the office and has also created resources for employees focused on navigating the hybrid work environment.

Did You Know?

HC is part of the [Assessment Accessibility Ambassadors Network](#) (link available to Government of Canada employees only). Its primary goal is to ensure that recruitment, selection, and staffing processes within the Canadian government are fair and accessible to all, regardless of potential barriers.

Built environment

HC strives for accessible and inclusive design solutions so that all persons can use physical spaces. The comments for built environment were summarized and grouped into the following themes:

- Inaccessible facilities
- Difficulties accessing parking lot facilities
- Lack of adequate or accessible parking near the workplace
- Reliability of motion-activated doors compared to physically activated doors
- Generic and specific comments about the return to the office
- Concerns about the availability of adaptive equipment in the workplace

Actions:

- HC will work with those responsible for parking facilities such as building owners and PSPC to identify barriers, solutions and in the design and enhancement of accessible spaces.
- Improve accessibility and access at HC Crown-owned or leased buildings by incorporating flexibility, adaptability, and user experience in the design of barrier free spaces.
- Consider accommodation needs when making decisions related to the updated [hybrid work](#) environment and the Government of Canada's [workplace modernization](#) initiative.
- Employees requiring further support for ergonomic services or adaptive equipment related to duty to accommodate can reach out to the [Accessibility Service Centre](#) (available only on the HC intranet).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Technologies must be accessible to all employees. The comments for ICT barriers were reviewed and grouped into the following themes:

- Inaccessible Information Technology (IT) Services
- Allowing IT to remotely access a laptop
- Digital application and web accessibility
- Accessibility of the “Read Aloud” function
- Use of dark mode to view electronic information
- Web pages and applications are not accessible

Actions:

- Work with partners to improve digital applications, web accessibility, and accessibility features for hardware and software applications. For example, one submission noted that the “read aloud” function in MS Teams chat was only available after writing a message and not while drafting the message. ICT has forwarded this issue for review as all MS platform issues are reported to Microsoft through Shared Services Canada.
- Collaborate with the Government of Canada’s [Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology](#) (AAACT) team to test adaptive technologies and seek solutions for accommodation needs.
- Continue to participate in the development of the Government of Canada’s [ICT Accessibility Standard and Accessibility Scorecard](#) which collects data about the level of integration of accessibility in Government of Canada technology.

Did You Know?

IT Accessibility isn’t just a developer’s responsibility, it involves collaboration between development, design and content teams. Everyone plays a role in ensuring accessibility by making it part of their project completion criteria. In fact, you don’t need to be an accessibility expert to implement fixes. With some basic knowledge, anyone can test and improve website accessibility. It can be fun to run these [easy checks](#).

Communication

HC is committed to ensuring all internal and external communication products meet accessibility standards. The two comments about communications barriers were grouped into the following themes:

- Inaccessible formats
 - » Inaccessible documents and PDFs
- Inaccessible communications
 - » No closed captioning for the internal Health Television

Actions:

- Raise awareness and encourage employees to use the new HC accessible MS Word and PowerPoint templates. The Communications and Public Affairs Branch developed these templates in collaboration with the PWDN, ART, and other partners. These products were launched to all staff in July 2024.
- HC plans to flag all PDFs without accessible HTML equivalents in their Accessibility Impact Assessment. The recommendation will be to replace or supplement these PDFs with accessible HTML by April 2025.
- HTV is an internal communications tool that displays news and information on screens in select HC buildings. HTV does not contain audio and therefore closed captioning is not provided, however, all primary information related to what is broadcasted on the screens is available in an accessible format to employees through internal emails, the intranet and to the public via social media or on Canada.ca.

Did You Know?

ART regularly collaborates with CPAB to ensure that employees can easily find the Accessibility Hub and feedback form on the intranet in two clicks or less, either via a banner or a search word. To promote the Hub and the feedback form, from September 2023 to August 2024, ART published 23 internal news articles with links to these resources.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

HC is working towards identifying accessibility barriers in the purchasing process. Procurement received one comment in the following area:

- Opportunities for businesses that are owned or led by persons with disabilities.

Actions:

- HC is considering ways to work with partners and [Public Services and Procurement Canada](#) (PSPC) on initiatives which focus on increasing participation from under-represented groups, such as persons with disabilities, in the procurement system.
- Encourage business owners to include accessibility into their requirements per the contract request form.

Transportation

Transportation at HC refers to the fleet of vehicles it owns, leases, or rents that are used by employees to carry out their work. No feedback was received for this reporting period. HC will continue to support and adhere to accessibility standards for the HC fleet.

Programs and Services

To be effective, programs and services must be accessible to all Canadians. No feedback was received for this reporting period.

Did You Know?

Following a 1-year pilot project, the HECSB People Management Initiatives' Anonymous Feedback Portal became a best practice. This portal gives Branch employees the opportunity to provide input and suggestions on issues related to workplace accessibility, among other topics.

Culture

ART offers guidance on the development and implementation of the HC's Accessibility Plan and Progress Report to support an HC culture that is accessible by default. The culture barrier comments were grouped into the following themes:

- Comments on the Accessibility Plan and Progress Report
 - » Applaud efforts of HC to mitigate accessibility barriers
- Accessibility awareness
 - » Include input from a wider audience about best practices

Actions:

- Explore new methods to promote the various feedback channels to encourage the public, and employees, to share ideas on how to improve accessibility.
- ART, as the Culture OPI, continues to update the internal Accessibility Hub with relevant tools and resources such as the employee playbook, tech tips, and the accessibility speaker series. The goal is to ensure the Hub remains user-friendly and accessible for everyone.
- Support departmental activities to build a diverse and inclusive workforce in response to the [Clerk of the Privy Council's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#) and the [Clerk's renewed Call to Action](#).

Did You Know?

The performance management agreements, which spell out the work expectations for each employee, within some branches at HC, now include an Inclusive Workplace work objective with indicators for accessibility.

Conclusion

HC continues to make meaningful progress in identifying and removing barriers across its workplace, programs, and services. Over the past year, HC has successfully collaborated with internal and external partners, strengthened training and mentorship opportunities, and enhanced accessibility practices through innovation and technology. While significant strides have been made, HC recognizes that accessibility is an ongoing journey. The focus remains on advancing efforts to further break down barriers and ensure that accessibility is embedded in everything HC does. As HC looks ahead, feedback and insights from stakeholders will continue to guide efforts and inform the development of the next Accessibility Plan. HC is committed to building on these accomplishments, striving toward a workplace and service model where everyone can fully participate and thrive.