



Health Canada

# 2026–2028 Accessibility Plan and 2025 Progress Report

**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 Minister**

I am proud to present Health Canada's second Accessibility Plan, a plan that marks an important milestone in our ongoing journey toward a more inclusive and barrier-free organization. Building on the foundation of the first plan, we have made significant progress over the past three years, learning, adapting, and taking concrete steps to create a more accessible environment for everyone.

Along with the Plan, I am pleased to share the third annual Accessibility Progress Report. This report highlights the meaningful steps the Department has taken over the past year to build a more inclusive and barrier-free workplace. Guided by feedback from employees and partners with lived experience, we continue to make progress toward lasting change. We achieved this progress thanks to the meaningful collaboration of persons with disabilities, employees, and internal and external partners. Their insights, expertise, and lived experiences shaped our actions and helped us identify what's working, what still needs attention, and where we can go further.

I remain committed to advancing accessibility across all areas of our organization in our services to Canadians, and to ensuring that everyone can fully participate, contribute, and thrive. As we move into the next phase, this updated plan reflects Health Canada's continued commitment to listening, learning, and taking action to embed accessibility in everything we do. Together, we are advancing toward a future where inclusion is not just a goal, but a standard.

Thank you,

**Greg Orenčsak (he/him)**  
Deputy Minister, Health Canada

# Introduction

The *Accessible Canada Act* (the Act) requires all Government of Canada departments and agencies to publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will remove barriers to make their organizations accessible by 2040.

An Accessibility Plan must be published every 3 years. This is Health Canada's (HC) second plan, outlining HC's ongoing commitment to removing barriers to accessibility in 8 priority areas.

The Act also requires HC to report annually on progress made against the Plan. The 2025 Progress Report is annexed to this Plan, and describes the progress achieved in the final year of the first Accessibility Plan.

The actions identified to respond to the barriers in all 8 areas of this plan will continue to drive improvements in accessibility at HC by the end of the second 3-year cycle. They will also help the Department reach the goal of being barrier free by 2040.

## About Health Canada

HC is the federal department responsible for helping Canadians maintain and improve their health, while respecting individual choices and circumstances. HC's goal is for Canada to be among the countries with the healthiest people in the world.

To achieve this goal, HC:

- relies on high-quality scientific research as the basis for its work
- conducts ongoing consultations with Canadians to determine how to best meet their long-term health care needs
- communicates information about disease prevention to protect Canadians from avoidable risks
- encourages Canadians to take an active role in their health, such as increasing their level of physical activity and eating well

The [raison d'être, mandate and role](#) is available on the HC website.

# General

The Accessibility Readiness Team (ART) at HC is responsible for the development and coordination of this Accessibility Plan, the Progress Report, and the feedback process, in accordance with regulations under the [Act](#) and direction provided in the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#). The team is part of the Talent and Workplace Culture Directorate within the Corporate Services Branch.

To request a copy of this Plan and Progress Report, 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 the Accessibility Readiness Team

**By Mail:** Health Canada Accessibility Feedback

70 Colombine Dr; Brooke Claxton building

Address Locator 0907D

Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

**Email:** [art-epa@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto: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. HC will acknowledge feedback in the same way 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.

# Accessibility Statement

HC is committed to making accessibility a core part of how it works and how it serves Canadians. Since 2016, HC has worked with the Persons with Disabilities Network (PWDN) to support employees with disabilities throughout their careers. HC has taken meaningful steps to create a more inclusive workplace and in 2024 launched the renewed Accessibility Service Centre, a team that supports managers and employees to help clarify barriers and explore accommodation options.

HC is building on this progress in its second Accessibility Plan by continuing to improve how it supports employees and designs accessible programs and services. Accessibility is not an add-on; rather, it needs to be included and normalized within workplace culture. By making accessibility part of everyday decisions and involving persons with disabilities at every stage, HC is working to embed inclusion into how the organization thinks, works, and serves Canadians.

## The Better Accommodations Project

The Government of Canada (GC) launched the [Better Accommodations Project \(BAP\)](#) to create best-in-class workplace accommodation across the public service. This project produced key tools, shaped by feedback from employees and managers, to make the accommodation process faster, clearer, and more supportive. The BAP toolkit for users help managers and employees understand when and how to request accommodations, why timely and respectful responses matter, and how to use the [GC Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) to make solutions portable when employees change jobs. Senior leaders also have a toolkit to assess and strengthen their organization's accommodation services.

HC supported the BAP by engaging directly with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) project leads and participating in BAP workshops. The Department is actively promoting the BAP toolkits through various all-staff communications and calling on senior leaders to oversee enhancements to the accommodation experience for persons with disabilities. These efforts help build trust, improve workplace culture, and ensure employees have the support they need to succeed.

# Areas described under Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act

Below are the barriers HC heard through consultations with persons with disabilities. The corresponding actions describe how the Department is taking measures to address the barriers and reduce the identified gaps. Each action includes a projected timeline that reflects the intended timeframe for progress, recognizing that timelines may evolve as work advances.

The Accessibility Standards Canada's standards for the priority areas of Employment, the Built Environment, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Communications, other than ICT (plain language) are applicable to HC. The Department is aligning itself with these standards and will continue to review and reference future standards as they are published.

## Employment

The goal of the Employment area under the Act is to ensure access to employment opportunities and accessible workplaces.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC provides a barrier-free employment journey where persons with disabilities are recruited, retained, and supported with effective accommodations to progress and advance equitably.

### Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Processes to request and obtain accommodations in second language evaluations and second language training are unclear.

- **Action 1:** The Single Window Access to Language Training team will clarify and share the steps branches must take for requesting and obtaining accommodations for second language training and evaluations. Detailed steps and contacts will be shared widely through Departmental channels, including intranet, and email. Clarify the process to implement language exemptions due to medical reasons in staffing processes.
  - » **Projected timeline:** March 2026

**Barrier:** Lack of a clear and consistent process for identifying and approving accommodations (in accordance with the [Directive on the Duty to Accommodate](#)).

- **Action 2:** Offer practical support to managers and persons with disabilities on the accommodation process and the duty to accommodate by providing clear guidance and using available tools, including the BAP toolkits and the [GC Workplace Accessibility Passport](#).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing. A formal manager training program has been offered since summer 2025.

**Barrier:** Staffing assessment tools and mechanisms are not conducive to candidates with disabilities demonstrating that they meet the merit criteria outlined in the job poster.

- **Action 3:** Review and update staffing and assessment tools, approaches, and resources to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.
  - » **Projected timeline:** December 2026

**Barrier:** Lack of awareness and clarity on steps and expectations for performance management for persons with disabilities.

- **Action 4:** Provide managers with clear guidance on performance management for employees with disabilities. Develop resources to help managers reduce delays related to accommodations, and offer ongoing case-by-case consultations to keep managers and employees engaged throughout the performance management process.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Resources provided by December 2026 and promotion will be ongoing.

**Barrier:** Lack of career progression for persons with disabilities.

- **Action 5:** Enable career success and progression of employees with disabilities through increased onboarding guidance, training, mentorship and career navigation support.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

## Did you know?

The [GC Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) is more than a tool, it's a resource that helps foster an inclusive workplace by building shared understanding. Its inventory of barriers and accommodation solutions supports open, respectful conversations between employees and managers.

## The Built Environment

The goal of the Built Environment area under the Act is to ensure all people can move freely around federal buildings and public spaces.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC facilities have barrier-free access for all.

#### Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Building code standards alone are insufficient in supporting workplace accessibility.

- **Action 1:** Support Accessibility Condition Reviews in existing facilities to identify further opportunities to improve accessibility beyond building code standards, where possible.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Persons with disabilities have identified visual and auditory barriers in open-concept work environments.

- **Action 2:** Where possible, adopt Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) GC Workplace model, in spaces that HC occupies, so that all employees have equal access to accommodations in a safe, functional, accessible and inclusive workplace based on their individual needs.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Some facility structures limit the possibility of adding modifications and features to more broadly support accessibility.

- **Action 3:** Work with PSPC to continue adding modifications and features, where possible, in buildings HC occupies.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

## Information and Communication Technologies

The goal of the ICT area under the Act is to ensure accessible digital content and technologies. ICT includes hardware, software, applications and websites for both external and internal facing systems for clients and employees.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

Ensure all HC ICT systems comply with accessibility standards by eliminating barriers and promoting digital accessibility across the organization. This will be achieved by focusing on the following areas:

- Ensuring all internal and external software, systems, and applications meet accessibility standards.
- Promoting individual responsibility for accessibility through education, training, and guidance.

## Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Digital products, including online forms, still pose accessibility issues.

- **Action 1:** Continue improving the accessibility of new web pages, mobile applications, and digital documents (both internal and public-facing) to meet the current digital accessibility standard (CAN/ASC-EN 301 549).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing, based on new regulations.

**Barrier:** The majority of software in use at HC is not fully accessible, including limited compatibility with assistive technologies, which creates barriers for employees who depend on these tools to perform their work.

- **Action 2:** Implement the Accessibility Update Program to assess existing ICT within the Department, collaborating with the teams responsible for these tools to create roadmaps for improving accessibility.
  - » **Projected timeline:** March 2027
- **Action 3:** Integrate accessibility checks into the software procurement process and ensure that accessible software options are clearly identified for users.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** New and upgraded software implementation requires proper checks and balances to ensure accessibility features are enabled.

- **Action 1:** Continue improving the accessibility of new web pages, mobile applications, and digital documents (both internal and public-facing) to meet the current digital accessibility standard (CAN/ASC-EN 301 549).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing, based on new regulations.
- **Action 3:** Integrate accessibility checks into the software procurement process and ensure that accessible software options are clearly identified for users.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Software does not align with the principle of universal design.

- **Action 1:** Continue improving the accessibility of new web pages, mobile applications, and digital documents (both internal and public-facing) to meet the current digital accessibility standard (CAN/ASC-EN 301 549).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing, based on new regulations.

- **Action 3:** Integrate accessibility checks into the software procurement process and ensure that accessible software options are clearly identified for users.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Persons with disabilities lack access to Information Technology (IT) systems or to tools needed to fully participate in the workplace.

- **Action 1:** Continue improving the accessibility of new web pages, mobile applications, and digital documents (both internal and public-facing) to meet the current digital accessibility standard (CAN/ASC-EN 301 549).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing, based on new regulations.
- **Action 4:** Promote accessibility awareness across the Department by offering training, guidance, and support to foster an accessibility-first approach in all IT projects.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

## Communication, other than information and communication technologies

The goal of the Communications area of the Act is to ensure barrier-free services and spaces for persons with disabilities.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

All communication materials produced by the Department are designed to be accessible, inclusive, and easy to understand for all audiences, including the public and employees, regardless of ability, disability (visible or invisible), or communication needs.

### Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Inconsistent use of plain and inclusive language across corporate communications, including those developed outside of the Communications and Public Affairs Branch (CPAB), may reduce clarity and accessibility for diverse audiences.

- **Action 1:** Share tools, templates, and tips across the Department, that improve accessibility of corporate communications. Encourage branch-level leadership to ensure their corporate communications are accessible by using these resources, supported by the results of CPAB's AI projects and plain language training.
  - » **Projected timeline:** 2027–28

**Barrier:** Employees may develop or maintain digital tools or products that are not accessible, limiting equitable access to information and services.

- **Action 2:** Share resources and provide support to all branches to develop and deliver accessible communications. Branch-level leadership is accountable to ensure their branch's digital tools and products are accessible.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Ministerial events held without appropriate accessibility measures, such as sign language or simultaneous interpretation, may limit individuals, regardless of location or ability, from fully understanding or engaging with the content being delivered.

- **Action 3:** Improve the frequency of fully accessible Ministerial events delivered by the Department by incorporating sign language interpretation and/or simultaneous interpretation, prioritizing high-profile, national announcements, especially announcements targeted to persons with disabilities, and applying accommodations wherever operationally feasible.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

## Did you know?

Many everyday conveniences started as accessibility accommodations. For example, closed captions were first developed to make television accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Today, they're widely used in noisy environments, for language learning, or simply to follow along more easily.

## The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The goal of the Procurement area of the Act is to ensure the purchasing of goods, services and facilities is accessible. HC procures most goods, services and facilities through a relationship with Shared Services Canada and PSPC.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC business owners and procurement authorities include accessibility requirements in their procurement specifications to ensure deliverables have the necessary accessibility features.

## Barriers

HC's consultation with employees and the PWDN did not identify any procurement-related barriers. A review of internal procurement policies and services was completed. HC will continue to assess accessibility needs on a case-by-case basis. The Department will ensure that procurement templates developed in-house are accessible and will increase awareness among Contracting Authorities by identifying mandatory accessibility training.

## The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

The goal of the Design and Delivery of Programs and Services area of the Act is to ensure Canadians receive services that are accessible to all.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC is equipped to design and deliver programs and services that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The Department builds accessibility into every stage of program and service development, from planning and design to implementation and evaluation.

### Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Programs and services teams have gaps in their knowledge and awareness of accessibility.

- **Action 1:** Provide programs and services teams with the individualized supports, resources, and tools to build and maintain capacity to consult, develop, design, deliver, and evaluate accessibility for their programs and services.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Unclear roles and responsibilities in advancing accessibility limit branches and senior management's ability to make programs and services barrier-free.

- **Action 2:** Ensure that all levels of the organization understand their responsibilities in advancing the accessibility of programs and services. Equip senior management to support their teams to identify and remove barriers within their programs and services.
  - » **Projected timeline:** December 2026

**Barrier:** Lack of engagement with persons with disabilities during the design and development of programs and services limits accessibility.

- **Action 3:** Support program and service teams, as needed, to engage with the disability community early and throughout the design and development process.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Some persons with disabilities in Canada cannot access digital services because they lack computers, smartphones, adaptive technology, or reliable internet. They need alternative ways to access services, such as by phone or mail.

- **Action 4:** Continue to support the teams providing programs and services in applying accessibility best practices, such as offering information in multiple formats, and by varying means, to help remove barriers.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

## Did you know?

The Healthy Environment and Consumer Safety Branch (HESCB) launched a programs and services pilot project that includes the development of an Accessibility Checklist tool to identify gaps and ensure the programs and services it delivers to the public meet accessibility standards.

## Transportation

The goal of the Transportation area under the Act is to ensure a barrier-free federal transportation network. This priority area applies to the accessibility of HC's fleet vehicles, which fall within the scope of responsibility of this Accessibility Plan. Other aspects related to transportation, such as public transit, municipal sidewalks or employees' personal vehicles, are outside the scope of this priority area.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC regularly assesses accessibility requirements for its fleet and ensures all vehicle purchases meet current and future accessibility standards.

### Barriers

HC's consultation with employees and the PWDN did not identify any transportation-related barriers. The Department has carefully reviewed its policies and services for this priority area and will consider any needs on a case-by-case basis should a barrier be identified.

## Culture

The Act includes a focus on building accessibility confidence and creating a culture of accessibility within the federal public service.

### HC's Desired Result by 2040

HC employees actively participate in creating an accessible workplace and integrate accessibility into their work. Persons with disabilities feel fully included and supported.

### Barriers and Actions

**Barrier:** Limited knowledge and empathy about accessibility prevent inclusion.

- **Action 1:** Expand the range of topics and resources on the Accessibility Hub, HC's internal resource site. Add guidance on empathetic and inclusive communications, invisible disabilities, intersectionality, and tools to help managers create welcoming workplaces. Promote the content widely to reach the largest audience possible in ways that support diverse learning styles.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Resources provided by August 2026 and promotion will be ongoing.

**Barrier:** Persons with disabilities continue to experience stigma, discrimination, and a lack of psychological safety.

- **Action 2:** Add resources on psychological safety, stigma, equitable treatment of employees with disabilities and disability-inclusive leadership on the Accessibility Hub, and share them through staff presentations, as outlined in the internal communication and engagement plan.
  - » **Projected timeline:** Resources provided by August 2026 and promotion by August 2028.
- **Action 3:** Use engagement activities to build awareness of the complexities of how intersecting identities, such as disability, race, gender, and socioeconomic status, shape workplace experiences and increase barriers to inclusion.
  - » **Projected timeline:** August 2028

**Barrier:** Persons with disabilities continue to experience inaccessible work practices and barriers in communications.

- **Action 4:** Continue to model and promote accessibility best practices, tools, and resources to create messaging, meetings, and documents which are accessible to a variety of disabilities. See also [Communication Action One](#).
  - » **Projected timeline:** Ongoing

**Barrier:** Managers do not fully understand the accommodations process.

- **Action 5:** Increase awareness of accommodation policies and processes at HC through targeted communications and engagement, working with the Accessibility Service Centre and the Office of Primary Interest (OPI) for Employment. See also [Employment Action Two](#).
  - » **Projected timeline:** August 2027

### Did you know?

HC is exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support persons with disabilities in the workplace. AI can assist with everyday tasks, such as summarizing long documents or meeting notes, and it has the potential to improve communication, simplify tasks, and reduce barriers.

## Persons with Disabilities Network

The HC PWDN began in September 2002 as an initiative to promote diversity and inclusion. The network brings together employees who have self-identified as persons with disabilities and their allies to ensure their voices shape policies that affect their work environment and their ability to fully participate at HC.

Over time, the Network expanded its role to include a career navigator pilot project, awareness campaigns, and accessibility events that foster an inclusive organizational culture. The PWDN works closely with leadership to identify systemic improvements, promote accessible practices, and advance equity in staffing, training, and workplace accommodation.

A Chair or Co-Chairs lead the Network, supported by a senior-management Champion appointed by the Deputy Minister. Together, they drive change, raise awareness, and embed accessibility into the fabric of HC.

**Email:** [pwdn-rph@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:pwdn-rph@hc-sc.gc.ca)

# Consultations

## Internal consultations

HC invited all employees to participate in barrier consultations through targeted all-staff communications and promotion by the employee networks.

Internal engagement played a key role in identifying barriers and shaping meaningful actions for this Accessibility Plan. In February 2025, with support from the PWDN, HC invited employees with disabilities to join these engagement sessions. The sessions were open to all staff and network members, giving them the chance to share experiences and identify workplace barriers.

After these sessions, OPIs drafted actions based on known barriers. In May 2025, HC held a second round of consultation sessions with OPIs and the PWDN to validate the draft actions and confirm they reflected the priorities and needs of employees with disabilities.

HC used accessibility best practices to make sure the sessions were inclusive. A total of 119 participants attended. They received written content in advance and were invited to request accommodations ahead of time. During the sessions, participants were able to provide live feedback in multiple ways, in writing afterward, or anonymously.

The Accessibility Leadership Committee (ALC) also reviewed the barriers and actions to ensure alignment with organizational priorities and to show leadership accountability in advancing accessibility.

## External consultations

External engagement was central to identifying barriers for this Accessibility Plan. Guided by the principle of “Nothing Without Us”, the PWDN worked with the ART to identify stakeholder groups representing different disability types and intersectional identities. These groups included advocacy organizations, service providers, and individuals with lived experience of disability.

ART invited 63 stakeholder groups to take part in virtual sessions. Of these, 26 accepted and ART held 6 group sessions between July and December 2024. Some participants also shared feedback in writing afterward.

To support broad and inclusive participation, consultations used multiple methods beyond the virtual group sessions. These included one-on-one calls and an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted on the [Consulting with Canadians](#) webpage from March to April 2025, and reached approximately 6,000 potential respondents through distribution lists and a social media campaign.

Feedback from these consultations directly informed the barriers and actions in this Accessibility Plan.

## Accessibility Leadership Committee

The ALC brings together senior executives from HC and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), along with the Chairs and Champions of the PWDN. The ALC oversees and guides the implementation of the Act and the Accessibility Plans in both organizations. It also helps ensure accountability across the Department in advancing accessibility.

The committee is chaired by the Director General of the Talent and Workplace Culture Directorate in the Corporate Services Branch. It provides feedback to the Accessibility Centre of Expertise (ACE), while members offer accessibility leadership within their own branches.

## Performance Measurement Framework for Accessibility

To track progress towards eliminating barriers and achieving the desired result for each priority area, ART is developing a performance measurement framework (PMF) in collaboration with OPIs and persons with disabilities. This approach aligns with guidance from the Office of Public Service Accessibility.

The PMF will include specific activities derived from the actions outlined in this Accessibility Plan, outcomes to assess the impact of these activities, and deliberate, data-driven key performance indicators to measure both outcomes and activities.

The PMF will be the internal reporting tool for this Accessibility Plan, as of April 2026. It will help HC identify and close gaps, ensure meaningful accessibility progress over the next 3 years, and inform the annual Progress Reports.

## Conclusion

This new Accessibility Plan builds on progress to date and reinforces HC's commitment to creating an inclusive, barrier-free environment for all. Informed by the voices of people with lived experience, this Plan focuses on meaningful action and accountability. Recognizing that accessibility is an ongoing journey, the Department will continue to learn, adapt, and improve to drive lasting change from now until 2040 and beyond.

# Annex: Health Canada 2025 Accessibility Progress Report

## Summary

HC's third Progress Report concludes the progress made in removing barriers across the 8 priority areas from the [first Accessibility Plan](#). HC published this Progress Report alongside its second Accessibility Plan to maintain annual reporting. The reporting period runs from September 1 to August 31 each year. Please see the "[General](#)" section in the Accessibility Plan as it also applies to this Progress Report.

## Areas in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

### Employment

**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.

HC continued to support managers and employees with disabilities through the Persons with Disabilities Specialized Recruitment Team (PWD SRT). This team provided one-on-one guidance to 54 managers on the Directive on the Duty to Accommodate, helping them understand their responsibilities and identify appropriate solutions in collaboration with employees. The PWD SRT fulfilled all requests for orientation from employees with disabilities.

The team also launched "Office Hours" in partnership with ACE. These confidential one-on-one appointments offer tailored guidance to managers on Duty to Accommodate. There have been 21 sessions with managers completed to date.

The PWD SRT also began the development of a formal manager training series. Initial content for these sessions drew on early findings from the BAP. The Managers' Network and the PWDN have provided feedback to support the development of training materials.

The Department has established a process to support HR-delegated managers in building diverse assessment boards, promoting accessibility and inclusive practices.

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

Managers have continuous access to updated data on hiring, promotions, and retention. Regular monitoring tracks career development and progression rates for employees with disabilities to assess progress toward achieving equality with employees who have not disclosed having a disability.

HC enhanced the recruitment experience by offering hiring managers the knowledge and guidance they needed to make staffing more accessible for persons with disabilities. For example, managers can work with staffing advisors to ensure accommodations are in place when candidates request them. The PWD SRT supports recruitment by drafting narrative assessments, helping managers articulate selection decisions, and coordinating resources such as specialized employment service providers and the Accessibility Service Centre.

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

211 employees with disabilities received career development opportunities such as acting in a higher level position. 37 employees with disabilities successfully moved to a permanent position at a higher level in the Department.

HC's Mentorship Plus Program has achieved 100% matching to date, fulfilling all mentorship requests from employees with disabilities. The Equitable Access to Language Training Program has accepted 100% of applications from employees with disabilities.

Since launching in 2024, Career Navigator services supported 100% of requests from employees with disabilities, assisting a total of 85 employees. This service helps persons with disabilities advance their career by offering coaching through the application and interview process, as well as by connecting candidates to managers with open positions.

In 2025, HC launched a tailored training program for managers on the Duty to Accommodate and best practices for onboarding employees with disabilities.

## The Built Environment

**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.

This year, in collaboration with PSPC, HC conducted formal accessibility reviews for every facility project to ensure compliance with accessibility standards. HC built accessibility features into new spaces, including offices in Vancouver and Toronto.

HC also worked with PSPC to finalize the Long-Term Accommodation Plan and the Accessibility Condition Reviews Plan, which will assess the built environment and identify opportunities to make facilities more accessible.

**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.

The National Intake Office responded to 100% of accessibility-related inquiries, including workplace lighting, accessible doors, lockers, and Duty to Accommodate requests. Although some requests, such as lockers and desk assignments, fall outside formal Building Management Plans, HC remains committed to exploring practical solutions, wherever possible.

## Information and Communication Technologies

**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.

The Digital Accessibility and Product Development (DAPD) team assessed the accessibility of all newly developed web, mobile, and desktop applications registered in the Application Portfolio Management (APM) system before putting them into operation. Every application must complete an Accessibility Impact Assessment (AIA) to receive an Authority to Operate. However, because branches do not always communicate this requirement to their employees, some applications are released without an assessment and are not always registered in the APM.

HC assessed all software in the joint HC and PHAC service catalog for accessibility. Of 1,111 software products:

- 16 (1.4%) were fully accessible
- 250 (22.5%) were accessible with known limitations
- 783 (70.5%) were not accessible
- 62 (5.6%) were assistive technologies

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

The Change Advisory Board (CAB) reviewed all new software requests to assess accessibility. CAB processed 288 software requests:

- 174 (60.4%) were approved outright
- 86 (30%) were approved with restricted use and only if no alternative was available
- 20 (6.9%) were approved with known limitations
- 1 (0.3%) were approved conditional on accessibility testing
- 7 (2.4%) were rejected

The Digital Transformation Branch (DTB) met with vendors from the 7 rejected requests to reinforce accessibility requirements for procurement and implementation.

HC has accessibility advisors who are available to support IT investment projects. There are 21 projects with IT components in process. Twelve projects do not qualify for an advisor because they already completed the accessibility process, use a commercial off-the-shelf product, or continue from last year and will undergo the AIA process. Of the remaining 9 eligible projects, advisors are assigned to 5 and 4 are pending assignment.

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

DTB delivered all planned accessibility training sessions. Six group sessions reached 85 employees. In addition, HC met every request for one-on-one custom training, providing 3 tailored sessions to 47 stakeholders.

During National AccessAbility Week in May 2025, DTB held an interactive roadshow across 3 HC office locations to raise awareness and promote an accessibility-first culture within the Department.

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

In April 2025, DTB reinstated the ICT Accessibility Working Group (AWG), approved its Terms of Reference and confirmed membership. The AWG is identifying and documenting accessibility gaps in ICT systems to guide future action.

## **Communication, other than information and communication technologies**

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

CPAB approved and implemented the PDF accessibility policy. This policy ensures that PDFs are created in ways that persons with disabilities can access and use, since PDFs are often inaccessible, especially to those using assistive technology.

CPAB also delivered 16 digital literacy training sessions, covering plain language writing for recalls, safety alerts, guidance documents, and inclusive communications. In addition, CPAB delivered 9 digital skills outreach sessions on how to create accessible products.

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

CPAB produced 36 videos with accessible components, including closed captions, described video, transcripts and/or web equivalent information for videos on Canada.ca, YouTube, and Facebook.

CPAB supported 30 Ministerial events; providing simultaneous interpretation and sign language for 2 out of 8 qualifying events where planning timelines and service providers availability allowed. CPAB provided simultaneous interpretation for both events held at the National Press Theatre.

CPAB supported HC in delivering 7 fully accessible all-staff events, providing simultaneous translation and sign language for each event. The Branch also supported 9 accessible newsletters published on the intranet.

## **The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

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

HC's Procurement Operations Division carried out a multi-year plan to update its templates and guidance, ensuring they are accessible. The work is now complete, and future updates will go through the same accessibility check. The Division communicated these changes to Contracting Authorities and clients, and promoted the use of accessible documents.

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

Procurement officers must now complete mandatory accessibility training by March 31, 2026. This requirement is included in employee training plans, and managers reinforce it during Performance Management Agreement discussions.

## **The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

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

In 2025, ART maintained the Accessible Programs and Services Community of Practice (P&S CoP). With no central office for programs and services at HC, this CoP connects leads across the Department and bridges gaps in knowledge of how to make services accessible. ART continues to send bi-monthly newsletters to members, who meet quarterly to facilitate knowledge sharing, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving related to accessibility.

ART's Microsoft Teams for the P&S CoP continues to serve 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.

In 2025, ART offered a new service to members of the P&S CoP to help improve of the accessibility of HC programs and services. The P&S Accessibility Support Service helps teams conduct accessibility reviews of the design, delivery and business practices of their program or service. ART provides tailored recommendations and best practices to improve accessibility and guidance to eliminate barriers within programs and services.

## Transportation

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

HC reviewed and assessed potential accessibility features for new fleet vehicles. Employee input and lived experience of disability shaped the identification of the most valuable features. Because accessibility needs vary, HC continues to work with the PWDN to gather input on accessible features for fleet vehicles.

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

This commitment remains on hold until TBS and PSPC release new fleet accessibility standards.

## Culture

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

ART undertook a literature review, with support from HC Library Services, to gain a stronger understanding of culture change and accessibility. ART examined over 400 articles to determine their relevance to culture change activities and methods for measuring culture change, retaining 107 articles for further review. ART summarized the key themes, which will inform the accessibility PMF, with the goal of strengthening the Department's ability to design, deliver and measure impactful initiatives that drive lasting culture change.

As part of HC's internal accessibility communications and engagement plan, ART offers presentations on accessibility, which include a call to action and provide resources for staff to enhance their knowledge. The branches and directorates requested 6 presentations, and ART reached 287 participants between September 2024 and August 2025.

For National AccessAbility Week 2025, ART launched a course titled "Accessibility Matters", available to all employees through the internal learning platform. To date, 270 employees have enrolled in the course.

As the lead for the annual HC International Day of Persons with Disabilities event, ART collaborated with the PWDN in 2024 to host “Finding purpose in accessibility”. The guest speaker, Ryan Straschnitzki, a former member of the Humboldt Broncos Junior Hockey Team, shared his insights on disability awareness, accessibility, and fostering an inclusive workplace. The live event drew over 1,000 attendees. The intranet recording received 438 views.

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

The updated Accessibility Hub on the intranet offers employees event recordings, resources and tools, to support best practices. The Hub serves as a central place for employees to share feedback on barriers and explore ways to advance workplace accessibility. In 2025, ART added a Manager’s Corner to better support managers in their role. A key addition, Manager’s Office Hours, provides one-on-one support to HC managers on accessibility, the Duty to Accommodate, and the accommodation process for employees with disabilities.

In winter 2025, HC updated the internal employee feedback form, part of the legislated feedback mechanism tool, to include a section on employee accommodations. This update shows HC’s commitment to identifying and removing barriers to accommodation.

The Department refreshed its Employee Accessibility Playbook in June 2025. HC archived 2 plays and replaced them with plays on trending topics: using PowerPoint Live and making accessible email signature blocks. Employees continue to view and download it frequently.

In August 2025, the OPIs for ICT and Culture established an Accessibility Ambassador Collective, bringing together branch-level accessibility leaders from HC and PHAC. The Collective will share best practices, tools, and resources to reduce duplication of effort across branches within both HC and PHAC. Representatives from 92% of HC branches attended the first meeting.

HC was consulted as part of the BAP. ACE promoted the BAP initial findings and toolkit through the Manager Technical Briefing sessions and through internal communication channels. The BAP toolkits will guide the Department towards an improved and more consistent approach to accommodations.

## Consultations

### Internal Consultations

In 2025, HC continued to work closely with the PWDN to ensure persons with disabilities directly shaped accessibility efforts. This reinforced the Department's commitment to an inclusive approach.

Key activities included:

- monthly meetings between ART and the PWDN to advance shared priorities, gather feedback, and find opportunities to work together
- monthly director-level Forum meetings where the PWDN and OPIs advance commitments and provide input on accessibility initiatives
- consulting the PWDN on the internal implementation plan
- facilitating all-staff consultation sessions in February 2025 to identify barriers
- leading PWDN consultation sessions in May 2025 to gather feedback on draft actions to remove known barriers
- engaging the PWDN Executive Committee in September 2025 to review the draft Accessibility Plan and Progress Report

Accessibility best practices supported these activities. For example, materials were shared in advance, participants could request accommodations, and employees could share feedback in different ways, including anonymously.

Key themes from the 2025 consultations highlighted the need for:

- clear and accessible communication
- accessible information technology systems
- continued investment in training and awareness
- better and more consistent accommodation processes
- stronger integration of accessibility into daily work practices

These consultations ensured the second Accessibility Plan reflects the real needs and priorities of employees with disabilities.

## Feedback

### How feedback was collected

HC collects accessibility feedback by phone, email and through 2 online forms, one for the public on the [HC Feedback on Accessibility web page](#) and one for employees on the intranet, both are monitored by ART.

HC ran social media campaigns in January and May 2025 on the [Healthy Canadians' Facebook page](#), [HC LinkedIn](#) and [X](#) accounts, to invite feedback and raise awareness of the options available to provide feedback. The May campaign aligned with National AccessAbility Week and also highlighted accessibility myths.

HC promoted its internal feedback tool in the Department's news bulletin, events and messaging on its internal broadcasting system, Health Television.

### What we heard

HC received 41 feedback submissions this period, up from 20 last period, and tagged each identifiable accessibility barrier by priority area. HC employees made 31 submissions and the public made 10. Most of the feedback was received through these online forms.

The breakdown of the number of feedback submissions per priority area is shown in the table below.

Priority area	Number of feedback submissions
Employment	4
Built Environment	9
Information Technology	4
Communications	11
Procurement	0
Programs and Services	4
Transportation	0
Culture	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

ART shared all the feedback with the appropriate OPIs. Below is a summary of the actions to address the feedback.

## Employment

The Employment OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- Persons with disability status in a scientific work environment
- Fair hiring of persons with disabilities
- Duty to Accommodate (DTA)

## Actions

As a science-based organization, HC is committed to fostering accessibility across the workplace so everyone can work safely and contribute fully.

HC regularly reviews its staffing practices to ensure fair career opportunities for employees with disabilities. Managers are encouraged to use inclusive assessment practices and adopt flexible hiring and retention strategies, such as micro missions or mentoring to help foster a more supportive and accessible workplace.

In fall 2025, the PWD SRT launched a training program to help managers support the career development of employees with disabilities. The program takes a process-oriented approach, focusing on DTA, the Duty to Inquire and practical strategies to reduce bias and improve retention.

HC is reviewing its accommodation processes to ensure they are timely and centered on the needs of employees with disabilities. This work aligns with the BAP, which aims to transform how accommodations are delivered across the federal public service.

## The Built Environment

The Built Environment OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- Inaccessible facilities
  - » Create laws for buildings to be accessible
  - » Lack of signage, automatic doors and motion activated wave sensors
  - » With the return to the office and shift to shared cubicle space, locker space for storing equipment and personal items is limited
- Environmental sensitivities in the workplace
  - » Bright overhead fluorescent lighting
  - » Need for fragrance free and chemical free policies

## **Actions**

HC supports the GC's goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. While HC does not create legislation, HC follows the Act, federal accessibility standards, and collaborates with PSPC and building owners to improve accessibility in Crown-owned or leased buildings. This includes issues related to automatic doors, storage, and signage.

HC works with the Accessibility Service Centre to implement workplace accommodations for environmental sensitivities as part of a DTA, provided the accommodations comply with building codes, tenant agreements, and Occupational Health and Safety requirements.

## **Information and Communication Technologies**

The ICT OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- MS Teams accessibility features
- Inaccessible digital applications
  - » Unable to see a SharePoint folder when font size is increased
  - » Screen reader compatibility with third party platforms

## **Actions**

HC works with the Information Management Team to improve the accessibility of digital products such as SharePoint and partners with the M365 Team to identify and remove barriers related to M365 tools.

Employees are encouraged to explore the Accessibility Corner on the 365 Central Hub where they can access tutorials and tips on using various Microsoft products and features.

HC screens all software for accessibility and flags any that do not meet accessibility standards. If the software is not accessible or partially accessible, HC develops an AIA and shares it with the Chief Information Officer for approval. HC flags this software for its inaccessibility and cautions against sharing it on the network.

The DAPD team hosted several workshops to raise awareness about accessible products:

- How to use the Colour Contrast Analyser Tool (April to July 2025)
- How to use NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA) screen reader from (October to June 2025)
- How to use the Wave Tool for checking accessibility (February 13, 2025)

## **Communication, other than information and communication**

The Communication OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- Inaccessible formats and meetings
  - » Inaccessible documents
  - » MS Teams transcription should be automatic
- Internal HC townhall and events
  - » Meeting materials not shared in advance
  - » Transcription services, QR codes, or poll links were inaccessible
- Social media
  - » HC on X (formerly Twitter)

### **Actions**

As of July 2025, only accessible PDFs can be posted to HC pages on Canada.ca. Except for legacy documents, no exemptions are allowed unless the document is urgently required for a medical or public health emergency.

HC is considering options to develop and promote an internal communications toolkit that will include inclusive language guidance and accessible document templates.

HC recommends event coordinators and moderators follow HC event [guidelines](#) (intranet) to ensure consistency and accessibility across the Department.

HC follows the GC's common approach for managing official social media accounts. HC utilizes its X account to provide newsworthy updates to stakeholders, industry and media.

## **The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

HC did not receive any feedback about procurement barriers.

## **The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

The Programs and Services OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- Barriers in internal service delivery
- Employee satisfaction with accessibility initiatives and programs

## Action

HC shares feedback with program areas to help them improve and plan future development.

## Transportation

HC did not receive any feedback about transportation barriers.

## Culture

The Culture OPI grouped its feedback into these themes:

- Gaps in knowledge and support
  - » Lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility concepts and practices
  - » Questions about accessibility and requests for resources
- Inclusion, psychological safety and workplace culture
  - » Attitudes and behaviours towards persons with disabilities
  - » Accountability amongst leadership
- Feedback on organizational commitments
  - » Lack of transparency around mandatory divisional workplace exercises creates confusion for employees
  - » Positive feedback on internal activities
  - » Improvements to the Accessibility Plan

## Actions

HC regularly adds new resources, tools, and training to the Accessibility Hub.

HC offers one-on-one sessions with managers and directors through the Manager's Office Hours to answer questions and help them build inclusive, supportive relationships with employees with disabilities.

ART will keep running the Diverse Perspectives of Employees with Disabilities Speaker Series to raise awareness of accessibility best practices.

HC expanded the employee accessibility feedback form so employees can share input on more topics, including attitudinal barriers at work.

HC is working to improve transparency and keep employees better informed.