Canadian Heritage Accessibility Progress and Feedback Report 2024

General

Provide feedback or contact us

For more information, to get a description of our feedback process, or to request alternate formats of Canadian Heritage's Accessibility Plan or Progress and Feedback Report (i.e., large print, Braille, audio), you can contact:

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Free Video Relay Service (VRS Canada) or TTY at 1-888-997-3123 (for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired).

Give feedback on this progress report

You can also provide feedback on the Canadian Heritage Accessibility Plan or barriers that you have encountered with Canadian Heritage through our Accessibility Feedback Mechanism.

Canadian Heritage at a glance

Canadian Heritage and its portfolio organizations play a vital role in the cultural, civic and economic life of Canadians. Arts, culture, heritage and sports represent more than $57 billion in the Canadian economy and close to 673, 000 jobs in sectors such as film and video, broadcasting, music, publishing, archives, performing arts, heritage institutions, festivals and celebrations.

Introduction

We are pleased to present our 2024 Accessibility Progress and Feedback Report summarizing efforts in implementing our [Accessibility Plan 2023-2025](#). The report outlines our advancements in removing barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities and our ongoing commitment to making Canadian Heritage an accessible workplace.

The report highlights progress made in relation to eight focus areas. Seven are aligned with our initial plan. A new pillar, transportation, was added this year, as directed by the Accessibility Commissioner for all federal departments.

The focus areas are as follows:

1. Employment

2. The Built Environment

3. Information and Communications Technologies

4. Communications, other than Information and Communications Technologies

5. The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

6. The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

7. Transportation

8. Culture change toward disability inclusion

The past year has been rich in change and accomplishment at Canadian Heritage.

In recognition of the need for cultural change, we developed a Culture Statement to promote inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility across the department. Disability issues were explicitly included in the statement, reaffirming our commitment to removing barriers and promoting a culture that values dignity, respect and the diversity of identities and experiences. The Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability has played an important role by actively participating in developing this foundational document and ensuring that it reflects the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities.

We also narrowed the gap in the representation of persons with disabilities and met the challenge of returning to a 3-day-a-week in-person work environment, while managing the relocation of employees to different buildings. This ever-changing environment has moved us to constantly adapt, to learn along the way, and to draw important lessons for the future. We have taken concrete steps in all our areas of intervention to identify, eliminate and prevent barriers encountered by employees with disabilities, as well as by the Canadians we serve.

The highlights of our achievements and continued focus for the years to come are representative of Canadian Heritage's commitment to combat and eradicate ableist mindsets,

the stigmatization of persons with disabilities, and the invisibilization they may experience as a result.

Consultations

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office, responsible for coordinating the integration of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility principles into our organizational practices, continues to engage with equity-deserving employee networks representing Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities, as well as religious communities and those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Canadian Heritage's efforts, considering various intersecting identities. We also continue to work closely in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability through monthly meetings to support the membership or raise any systemic or ad-hoc issues.

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office's 2024 consultation included engagement with the lead of the eight focus areas and the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability through semi-formal discussions around each action item. The responses indicated a mix of completed, ongoing and adjusted targets.

Areas in section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

Employment

Recruitment and representation

In March 2023, there was a significant gap between our workforce representation of employees with disabilities (7.4%) and the workforce availability (9.3%). However, by September 2024, the representation of persons with disabilities had surpassed the availability of our department's workforce, standing at 10.1% of employees who self-identify as a person with a disability. The proportion of persons who self-identify and are in management positions is 34.8%, meeting Canadian Heritage's proportion of 34.2% of management position in the organization. Initial analyses also show that the average salary of persons with disabilities is higher than the departmental average.

Building on this progress, we are now looking to further our commitment to achieving inclusive growth for persons with disabilities, in line with the government's broader recruitment targets.

To support the Government of Canada's commitment to hire 5, 000 new employees with disabilities, Canadian Heritage aims to hire 61 additional employees who identify as people with disabilities by 2025. As of 2023, Canadian Heritage has reached 41% of this target with 25 new hires, and in 2024, this progress increased to 53% with a total of 32 new hires.

While progress has been made towards our recruitment goals, sustained efforts and targeted strategies are essential to achieve our full recruitment goal and to embed inclusion in the long term. As we continue to strive to meet our recruitment goals, fostering an inclusive environment where persons with disabilities are enabled to do their best work and feel a sense of belonging remains a priority.

This includes:

- The use of sector scorecards that include hiring and retention objectives to support management in their hiring decisions. These scorecards include performance indicators and specific objectives for each of the designated groups and employees from equity-deserving communities. The disaggregated data and precise objectives have made a real difference, where senior executives have turned their intentions into action, and have continued to show real progress.

- The creation of a PM-04 process to hire program officers. The pool is open to all Canadians and permanent residents that self-identify as having a disability. Appointments resulting from this process have also been added to the common performance agreement commitments for executives. Assessment tools continue to be adjusted after each phase of the hiring process to minimize potential bias or barriers applicants might face.

- Creation of a tool used for all advertised recruitment processes to detect at which stages of the selection process candidates either are eliminated or withdraw to identify and address potential barriers for those who self-identify as belonging to an equity-deserving group.

Moving forward, Canadian Heritage will continue refining ways to address barriers to hiring and support managers and human resource advisors to create bias and barrier-free recruitment conditions.

Key initiatives include:

- Promotion of workshops for managers on the new requirements of the *Public Service Employment Act* and their impact on staffing activities.

- More support for managers to ensure bias and barrier-free assessments of candidates, such as training of evaluation committees on evaluation bias, diverse interview panels, and assessment tools to evaluate merit in different ways to mitigate potential bias.

- Mandatory verification steps have been developed to ensure that job posters and communication with candidates are in plain language and accessible.

- Implementation of a mandatory training curriculum for staffing advisors on bias, diversity, and employment equity issues.

- Regular discussions within Human Resources between the employment equity and staffing teams to demystify the use of data and the barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

- Use of a centralized language training fund to support employees from employment equity groups. Of all applicants, 11% self-identified as living with a disability and benefited from 17% of the fund's allocation.

Accommodation services

Canadian Heritage established an entry point for providing accommodation services to employees and managers. The centre for accommodation services, named the Bob Fern Centre, collaborates with internal partners to make the workplace accessible by providing support, advice, access to professional services, tools (adaptive computer technology, office equipment, ergonomic assessment) and other accommodations.

The number of requests has increased over the past year due to the office moves in the National Capital Region and implementation of the prescribed presence in the workplace. Cases varied in complexity and represented a significant amount of organizational learning to address new types of accommodation requests.

From January 2024 to October 2024, the Bob Fern Centre addressed 196 accommodation requests and 121 were completed. On average:

- 28% of requests were closed in less than 10 days.

- 25% of requests were closed between 11 and 21 days.

- 34% of requests were closed between 21 and 60 days.

- 10% of requests were closed between 2 months and 6 months.

- 4% of requests needed more than 6 months to be closed.

Harassment and violence prevention and resolution

Canadian Heritage recognizes that employees with disabilities face higher rates of discrimination and harassment when compared to those without disabilities. Our goals remain to prevent incidents from occurring, respond effectively when they do, and provide timely support to affected employees through the resolution process.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- Securing an online platform to support the delivery of mandatory training on harassment and violence prevention and resolution. Live virtual training led by the Office of Ombuds and Well-Being held in November 2024 and will carry on into 2025.

- Collaborating with internal partners to foster a culture of zero-tolerance for micro-aggressions, harassment, and discrimination through training.

Focus for 2025

- Future self-identification campaigns will emphasize the *Accessible Canada Act* definition of disability.

- Continue to foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace environment that attracts diverse groups and communities to Canadian Heritage and inspire and support them to stay.

- Developing strategies to mitigate some managers' perceived challenges with hiring people with disabilities by providing them with necessary tools and knowledge to support and retain employees.

- With the launch of the Reconciliation Action Plan, dedicated information-sharing meetings will help include Indigenous perspectives and ways of thinking to inform recruitment approaches and practices to support the use of an intersectional approach to accessible employment.

- Continue active participation in the Better Accommodation Project led by Employment and Social Development Canada that aims to improve the accommodation process for persons with disabilities and working with other partners to test solutions, share best practices, and learn together.

- Launch the digital version of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport department-wide following the 2024 pilot.

- Develop and launch ethical leadership training for management to support executives and managers with their capacity to navigate difficult situations, understanding and applying knowledge of intersectionality and dimensions of discrimination, including accessibility considerations.

- Collaborate with corporate security to update emergency procedures to include harassment and violence that may be experienced by persons with disabilities and other equity-deserving groups.

The Built Environment

Ensuring the physical workplace was accessible was a key priority this year. With Canadian Heritage managing an office move for employees in the National Capital Region, in addition to changes to the prescribed presence in the workplace that would see an increase in working on-site, an accessible by design approach remains critical to continued success. Navigating this change with disability inclusion in mind and of the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability in

partnership with the department's real property team helped ensure the needs of persons with disabilities were considered from the start.

Though much progress has been made, Canadian Heritage will continue to adapt to evolving needs of employees. Our overall goal is to proactively prevent or remove barriers through ongoing engagement, regular reviews of facilities, and timely issue resolution.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- Provision of various work sites to accommodate diverse needs, offered throughout Les Terrasses de la Chaudière complex, the Fontaine building, and regional offices. We have worked closely with all the department's employee communities, committees and networks to create concepts that first and foremost meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This includes well-being rooms, collaborative spaces, dim lighting, ergonomic furnishings, and unassigned spaces.

- The design of our new premises at the Fontaine building toward the Government of Canada workplace fit-up standards. The aim is to provide employees with the flexibility to choose the workspace that best suits their needs, while eliminating barriers wherever possible. Any new fit-ups are accessible, in accordance with best practices and accessibility standards.

- Rapid resolution of all reported barriers to workplace access and issues that may prevent employees from performing their duties or participate fully at work.

- Further invested in collaborative efforts with partners, including the Bob Fern Centre, Occupational Health and Safety, the Workplace Transformation team, Real Property and Accommodations, and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office to provide accommodations to address concerns with the prescribed presence in the workplace. Each decision was validated with partners and adjusted according to their comments.

- Utilization of inventory of accommodation requests to better plan of the implementation of solutions for employees with accessibility needs.

- Development of a newsletter through a SharePoint site to keep employees updated on information related to the move to the Fontaine building. This included details on accessibility standards and accommodations processes. This initiative helped to better prepare employees for the changes, thus reducing the stress associated with the transition.

Focus for 2025

- Continue to work with the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability and partners on addressing Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability priorities on the built environment and create case-specific solutions where required for individual accommodations cases.

- Provide ongoing support to Occupational Health and Safety and the Bob Fern Centre for standards for requests of service dogs to support employees in the workplace.

- Proactively address accommodation needs and maintain an updated list of workplace barriers to be responsive to accommodation needs and requests.

Information and Communications Technologies

Our goal is to ensure our systems and equipment are accessible. While accessibility challenges persist in information and communications technologies, our Chief Information Officer Branch actively supports employees with disabilities and addresses broader information and communications technologies challenges, especially public-facing information and communications technologies.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- All employees at the branch level underwent role-specific training. Additionally, essential and advanced accessibility training was provided to around 40% of IT employees with a focus on capacity building and awareness.

- Continued collaboration with accessibility leads on interdepartmental accessibility projects aimed at improving systems, services, software, websites and equipment.

Focus for 2025

- Continue to participate in international and interdepartmental accessibility forums and task groups to learn and improve our response to challenges.

- Maintain active engagement with Shared Services Canada on Office 365 accessibility issues.

- Continue to integrate accessibility considerations into life-cycle management of Canadian Heritage systems, such as the Department Grants and Contributions Information Management System, and any new information and communications technologies.

- Advance Treasury Board Secretariat priorities set for systems compatibility across the public service.

Communications, other than Information Communications Technologies

Following consultations with the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office, the Communications Branch is implementing new strategies to facilitate accessibility and promote awareness of disability issues.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- Accessibility standards were prioritized throughout the Intranet migration process, with input from internal experts to ensure compliance and inclusivity as much as possible.

- Provide access to accessibility and plain language best practices and training to improve both internal and external communications.

- Consistent use of accessibility guidelines across social media, web, and creative services teams to ensure accessibility.

- Implementation of standards/guidelines for closed captioning, American Sign Language and Langue des signes québécoise and Communication Accessible Real-time Translation services to support events.

Focus for 2025

- Undertake training on creating accessible web content and documents.

- Leverage web feedback tools to enhance clarity, navigation and content structure.

- Participate in Government of Canada Community of Practice discussions on social media accessibility guidelines and align with Accessibility Standards Canada guidelines.

The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The Canadian Heritage Contracting and Material Management Directorate has modernized its practices to integrate accessibility requirements into its various processes.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- Training employees to advise clients on accessibility considerations in procurement.

- Updates to internal tools and templates to ensure accessibility requirements and considerations in procurement processes.

- Work with other government departments and agencies' accessibility offices towards best practices in accessibility focused procurement.

- Ongoing collaboration with accessibility subject matter experts to keep Canadian Heritage updated on evolving standards.

Focus for 2025

- Develop and monitor accessibility indicators through consultation with the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office.

- Continue to ensure that all new procurement employees receive training on accessibility through the Canada School of the Public Service, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and internally.

- Continue to collaborate with other departments and agencies and accessibility subject matter experts to keep Canadian Heritage updated on evolving standards, ensuring that internal tools and templates and procedures are updated to reflect emerging best practices.

The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Canadian Heritage plays a vital role in funding arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors in Canada, guided by a core mandate to promote inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible expression of Canadian identity.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- Accessibility improvements to 10 internal job aids and 14 tools.

- Adaptation of training materials, including those on grants and contributions and online courses on accessibility.

- Completion of 10 accessibility-focused training sessions covering a range of relevant topics for employees in the Centre of Excellence for Grants and Contributions.

Focus for 2025

- Ongoing development of accessible templates for grants and contributions processes.

Transportation

This pillar was added in 2024. To engage with the communities served by the programs we deliver, as well as to work effectively with our partners, accessible transportation is increasingly essential for maintaining internal/external relationships. For this reason, transportation was added as a new priority area in 2024.

Focus for 2025

- Reinforce communications to help ensure employees with disabilities are aware of the resources available to them to facilitate their travel. Ensure the transportation help desk responds to their diverse and unique needs.

- Continue to participate in Government of Canada travel tool forums and working groups to learn and improve our tools and customer service, and to raise accessibility issues and challenges faced by our employees.

Culture change toward disability inclusion

Canadian Heritage is committed to ensuring that employees with disabilities feel a sense of respect and value within our organizational culture, where we continue to make their lives and experiences visible and challenge ableist ways of thinking.

At the heart of these efforts is the department's Culture Statement, which outlines a vision for promoting inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility. An Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Action Plan is being developed to implement this vision, focusing on measurable and evidence-based targets to build an inclusive workplace.

Many of the achievements over the past year across the eight areas of focus have shown a commitment to improving our processes to ensure they are accessible by design, and this has had a ripple effect that has also led to tangible change in our mindsets and behaviours when approaching our work every day. In particular, the commitment to accessibility is reflected in various areas of departmental operations.

Human resources employees apply an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility lens through recruitment and staffing, and it has shown gains for not only employees with disabilities, but other equity-deserving communities too. This also has an influence on hiring managers who are given advice on how to participate and lead more inclusive and equitable hiring at Canadian Heritage. The Bob Fern Centre is another testament to how Canadian Heritage is changing its workplace accommodation practices in a meaningful way by taking a "yes-by-default" approach to something that has a history of being painful and frustrating for employees. Though far from perfect, there is a commitment to continuously improve.

In procurement, accessibility checks and balances are integrated directly in the process, and advisors are equipped with the knowledge and ability to support all other areas in the department to ensure a disability lens is applied to contracting.

Our approach to information technology has also seen a tremendous commitment to learning and applying this learning into our daily practice to help reinforce disability inclusion for both internal and public-facing tools and technology used by the department.

Key achievements in 2024 include:

- The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office developed and continues to promote Canadian Heritage's Culture Statement with support from members of the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability who were integral in ensuring persons with disabilities were included. In particular, the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability advocated for the inclusion of ableism and invisibilization as forms of discrimination highlighted in the statement.

- Through support from the department, the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability held two retreats this year to foster cultural change through their advocacy for the needs of employees with disabilities and offering social support.

- Canadian Heritage received two internal and five external feedback submissions related to culture and worked collaboratively to find resolution for these feedback submissions (see the Feedback Annex for more information).

- From January to November 2024, Canadian Heritage has sent out 10 issues of its internal Accessibility newsletter to keep employees informed of accessibility initiatives and events. The newsletter reaches an internal audience of approximately 2, 000 employees and is sent to 18 Government of Canada employees across the federal public service.

- Based on a recommendation from the Deputy Minister Champion for Employees with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service, Canadian Heritage adopted the use Calibri 12 as the default font in Outlook to facilitate an accessible reading experience.

- Responded to 23 inquiries from employees about the accessibility of documents. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office has provided guidance to employees on improving document compliance. Monthly training will begin in December 2024 to improve internal capacity to develop accessible documents.

- In keeping with the principle of "Nothing without us," Canadian Heritage has built partnerships and collaborated with employment equity groups including:

  - the Service Dog Working Group managed by the Office of Public Service Accessibility at Treasury Board Secretariat to develop a government-wide internal guideline for managers and employees; and

  - the Better Accommodation Project which aims to improve the accommodation process for people with disabilities.

- Monthly Accessibility Allies meetings enable staff to share knowledge and promote accessibility best practices within their teams.

Focus for 2025

Looking ahead, key initiatives include:

- Expanded document compliance training by increasing the amount of accessible document training to assist staff in meeting compliance standards.

- Corporate agreement for accessibility services by establishing agreements for the provision of resources for American Sign Language, Langue des signes québécoise, Communication Accessible Real-time Translation, Braille, and audio formats across Canadian Heritage.

- Monitoring progress by developing new tools to track accessibility goals across the department.

Lessons Learned

In our second year of reporting, we have gained key insights that will shape our future strategies, with each focus area revealing specific gaps and growth opportunities.

A key finding is the need for increased training, as some areas are highly dependent on specialist skills and up-to-date technology, often requiring external resources. Addressing these areas is essential to maintain progress and overcome obstacles.

Key lessons learned include:

- Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data is essential to accurately identify the diverse needs of persons with disabilities, and to design more targeted accessibility solutions.

- Sharing accessibility practices across departments helps teams create inclusive environments.

- Collaborating with expert partners on a regular basis allows us to proactively identify and prevent barriers, strengthening overall accessibility efforts.

- Providing clear communication and support during transitions in the workplace helps to reduce employee anxiety, making change a smoother and more positive experience.

- Addressing barriers to recruitment has led to improved recruitment practices as a whole.

- External constraints can limit our ability to fully implement accessibility measures, including procurement standards and centralised policies. Addressing these barriers through innovative, framework-based solutions will be crucial for progress.

- Limitations in funding, resource allocation, and upgrading technology slows progress towards our goals. Legacy systems, costly short-term replacements or upgrades, and limited support for technical training highlight the need for more robust investment.

Conclusion

As we near the end of our first 3-year period, we recognize that the next phase is an important moment to evaluate our progress, refine our strategies, and expand our consultation process to include diverse perspectives, and continue to be responsive to the Clerk's Call to Action.

The focus of this next phase will be on demonstrating measurable impacts by:

- establishing new measurement tools to track and sustain progress,
- furthering our commitment to inclusive hiring, and
- enhancing targeted supports for equitable career opportunities.

We will continue to partner with the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability to identify priorities of the persons with disabilities community to support the development of a plan that is responsive to the challenges brought forward. We will respond to the evolving needs of our employees and those we serve by:

- strengthening relationships with equity-deserving communities,

- improving accessibility of digital tools, and
- fostering an open feedback culture.

Glossary

View the [glossary here](#).

Annex A: Feedback

The [Canadian Heritage Accessibility Feedback Mechanism](#) enables Canadian Heritage employees and Canadians with the opportunity to provide insight on:

- Accessibility barriers they have encountered while interacting with or working within the department.

- Feedback on the Canadian Heritage Accessibility Plan or annual Accessibility Progress and Feedback Reports.

Individuals can provide feedback through:

- the Accessibility Feedback Mechanism online form,
- by mail,
- by email,
- or by telephone.

Respondents can choose to identify themselves or remain fully or partially anonymous and all submissions will be treated with the utmost respect for privacy.

As required and to address feedback efficiently, Canadian Heritage uses the following process:

- Each feedback submission is tracked and assigned to an appropriate team or "pillar" for resolution.

- Acknowledgement emails are sent to non-anonymous submitters confirming receipt and notifying them that their feedback is under review. A follow-up response is sent once a resolution has been determined.

- Upon completion and communication of a resolution, the case is formally closed.

- For internal anonymous cases, updates on resolutions are communicated in the Canadian Heritage internal monthly Accessibility newsletter.

Update on Canadian Heritage Accessibility Feedback

Since the publication of the first annual Accessibility Progress and Feedback Report, Canadian Heritage has continued to receive valuable feedback to guide ongoing efforts to identify and address accessibility barriers for Canadian Heritage employees and Canadians.

Below are key trends that have been identified from both internal and external feedback over the past year:

Internal Feedback

Trend 1: Accommodations

Barriers

Accommodation feedback was primarily related to:

- the National Capital Region office move, and
- the updated Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace to a minimum requirement of three days per week for all public servants.

How are these issues being resolved?

- The Bob Fern Centre for Employee Accommodations made a question-and-answer document available to address issues related to accommodations in the context of a move.

- A pro-active communications strategy was deployed to inform the Centre's clients that they would be considered in the move. Communications were also aimed at identifying new needs linked to the change and the new reality of an unassigned seating environment.

- Pre-move visits were organized so that employees with accessibility needs could see the new workplace and work together to find solutions that would meet their needs. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office has worked with the Bob Fern Centre to promote their services and employees' rights under the [Directive on the Duty to Accommodate](#) in the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office's internal monthly Accessibility newsletter.

- Ongoing promotion of the use of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport to support conversations on accessibility and accommodations.

Trend 2: Barriers related to information and communication technology in a hybrid setting within the built environment.

Barriers

Several feedback submissions reported problems with audio clarity in hybrid meetings, with some employees struggling to hear virtual participants in certain meeting boardrooms.

- New microphones and new cameras with auto-focus and zoom capabilities are being installed in meeting rooms throughout the regional offices and National Capital Region. These devices improve audio and visual clarity to ensure that all participants can fully participate in hybrid meetings.

External Feedback

Most of the external feedback continued to be identified as spam. A small number of the submissions which were not identified as spam, were related to accessibility, with varying concerns, in which no specific trend could be established.

The following trends have been identified for the relevant types of submissions:

- A small number of submissions requested information on services such as Video Remote Interpreting.

- A small number of submissions were unrelated to accessibility but were about other aspects of Canadian Heritage's mandate. In these cases, the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office worked with the appropriate departmental teams to provide solutions.

- In the few cases where feedback was unrelated to accessibility or the work of Canadian Heritage, and when non-anonymous, submissions were managed by guiding individuals to the appropriate department or organization to effectively resolve their concerns.

Next steps: Measuring the success of the Feedback Mechanism

In Summer 2024, Canadian Heritage conducted a department-wide survey to assess employees' understanding and perception of the Canadian Heritage Accessibility Plan 2023-2025 and the Accessibility Feedback Mechanism. The results of the survey show that progress has been made with many employees being familiar with the Accessibility Plan and a high level of awareness of resources such as the Bob Fern Centre for Employee Accommodations. Feedback highlighted positive developments in representation and accessibility.

The survey was also an indicator of areas for improvement. There are still gaps in awareness, particularly in relation to the feedback mechanism and the Information and Communication Technologies accessibility tools available. In addition, employees with disabilities reported feeling less comfortable than others in asking for accommodations.

To address these areas, Canadian Heritage will focus on:

- Increasing awareness of feedback processes and accessibility tools through targeted communications.

- Expanding training initiatives to ensure full and inclusive access to resources.

- Greater visibility for accessibility networks and consistent support for the elimination of barriers.

- Promoting a supportive environment that encourages all employees to request accommodations when needed.

To further evaluate and improve the Accessibility Feedback Mechanism, Canadian Heritage plans to conduct an additional survey that will inform of any adjustments needed to ensure effective implementation of the Plan and the Feedback Mechanism remains efficient, accessible and responsive.

Conclusion

There was a decrease in the number of internal feedback submissions in 2024 compared to the previous year. However, feedback is often received through regular meetings with the Advisory Committee on (Dis)Ability and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Office to openly discuss challenges and find solutions for the persons with disabilities community. Finding new ways to promote the feedback mechanism as a tool for all employees to identify barriers and address them will be important in the coming years.

Support services such as the Bob Fern Centre for Employee Accommodations and the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport are increasingly used by employees. While Canadian Heritage has made progress in the promotion of employee support tools, resources and services, the department is committed to ongoing efforts to address both conscious and unconscious bias. Through ongoing education, training, and encouragement of a "yes-by-default" approach to accommodations, Canadian Heritage aims to foster an inclusive culture of care that values all abilities.

Statistics

Since the launch of the accessibility feedback mechanism was launched in December 2022, Canadian Heritage has received a total of 99 submissions:

- 42 submissions (42%) from internal sources (employees), and
- 57 submissions (58%) from external sources (public).

These figures are the basis for the tracking of engagement and response rates over time.

As of October 22, 2024, Canadian Heritage has received 48 feedback submissions over the course of the calendar year through the Accessibility Feedback Mechanism:

- 14 submissions (29%) were internal (employees), and
- 34 submissions (71%) were external (public).

To date, 14 internal and 33 external submissions have been resolved, resulting in a 98% resolution rate for the year.

Table 1: Feedback by Pillar identified in the Accessibility Plan

Pillar	Submissions received from internal sources	Submissions received from external sources
Employment (specific to accommodation)	7	0
The Built Environment	2	0
Information and Communications Technologies	2	0
Communications, other than Information and Communications Technologies	1	4
The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities	0	0
The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services	0	1
Transport	0	0
Culture	2	5
Total	**14**	**10**

Note: The external feedback which was either unrelated to accessibility or identified as spam was not included.

Table 2: How feedback was provided through the feedback mechanism

How feedback was provided	Number of submissions received internally	Number of submissions received externally
Online form	11	30
Email	0	4
Phone	3	0
Video Relay Service (VRS)	0	0
Physical mail	0	0
Total	**14**	**34**