



2024 Progress Report on the Accessibility Plan for Polar Knowledge Canada

June 2025

The Original version was signed on June 26, 2025, by:
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General

Following the publication of Polar Knowledge Canada three-year [Accessibility Plan](#) on January 30, 2023 and our first annual progress report in March 2024, this Polar Knowledge Canada Accessibility Plan Progress Report outlines actions taken to remove barriers to accessibility throughout the 2024 calendar year. Our current Accessibility Plan and progress reports align with the mandates of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and its Regulations, which requires that all federal government entities prepare and publish annual progress reports relating to their Accessibility Plans. While the Act itself mandates progress reporting, the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#) (SOR/2021-241), Section 5(1) clarifies that these progress reports on the implementation of the Accessibility Plan must be published at least once every year.

This report reflects the actions, feedback, and consultations from January 2024 to the end of December 2024.

As per Section 4(1) of the Regulations, a new Accessibility Plan must be published every three years. Therefore, the next plan must be published no later than December 31, 2025, in accordance with regulatory requirements.

The seven areas covered under Section 5 of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) are:

- a. Employment
- b. Built environment
- c. Information and communication technologies (ICT)
- d. Communication, other than ICT
- e. Procurement of goods, services, and facilities
- f. Design and delivery of programs and services
- g. Transportation

The actions outlined in the Accessibility Plan, published on January 30, 2023, have been reviewed. No new barriers were identified, therefore no additional action items have been added. For ease of reviewing this document, these actions are copied and pasted below. Please note that these actions are not to be modified, as they are part of the original Accessibility Plan.

Contact Information

You are invited to share your feedback on barriers to accessibility, the implementation of the current Polar Knowledge Canada Accessibility Plan, or the contents of this progress report. You may submit feedback anonymously by opting not to provide personal information. All feedback regarding accessibility will be acknowledged. If a response is requested, we will reply in the same manner in which the feedback was received. Please note that anonymous feedback will not receive a response or acknowledgment.

You may use our contact information to request a copy of the Accessibility Plan, the Progress Report or the feedback process in an alternate format such as large font, braille, American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).

For all inquiries or feedback on [Polar Knowledge Canada's Accessibility Plan](#), please contact Michelle Bergeron, Senior Manager, Human Resources at HR_RH@polar-polaire.gc.ca or 343-574-6022. Inquiries or feedback may also be sent by mail to Polar Knowledge Canada's Headquarters in Cambridge Bay, at Canadian High Arctic Research Station, 1 Uvajuq Road, P.O. Box 2150, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, X0B 0C0.

What we have learned

As Polar Knowledge Canada continues its efforts to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility, working toward a barrier-free Canada by 2040 as outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*, we acknowledge that both existing and new barriers persist. We have encountered both challenges and opportunities that have impacted the delivery of specific actions outlined in the current Accessibility Plan. Across the Agency, there have been limited mechanisms for the collection of quantifiable (countable) data related to accessibility progress implementation.

Beginning in 2026, the Agency will explore ways to strengthen its capacity to measure and report on this kind of data, including the potential development of defined indicators to support future integration into regular business practices.

In 2025, progress reporting and the development of Polar Knowledge Canada upcoming Accessibility Plan for 2026-2028 will focus on exploring barriers and potential actions unique to employees and clients in the North (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut), with a particular emphasis on Employment in the North.

Areas in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

Employment

Polar Knowledge Canada is committed to improving accessibility and inclusion in the workplace. As outlined in our Accessibility Plan published on January 30, 2023, we identified key barriers impacting employees with disabilities related to employment. These include the absence of an Employment Equity program, which limits access to resources that support career progression, and gaps in tracking the full accommodations process, which may leave unidentified obstacles in place. Over the past two fiscal years, efforts have been made to address these barriers as part of our ongoing commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

Actions

- Polar Knowledge Canada will engage in the development of an Employment Equity program This program will:

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- leverage other similar organizations to create a network of employees with disabilities that meets regularly to discuss disability-related issues and champions the inclusion of people with disability.
 - include the regular promotion of training and events aimed at improving accessibility, disability awareness, inclusion and disability confidence for our employees.
 - Since the *Accessible Canada Act* has broadened the definition of “disability” and recognizing that disabilities can arise at any point in life, Polar Knowledge Canada will launch an internal email campaign as part of its Employment Equity plan. The email will explain the expanded definition of ‘disability’ as well as the importance of ‘Self-Identification’ and will encourage employees to revisit their self-identification status if they so decide, which may increase our current representation rates.
 - Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to work towards meeting and surpassing the current Workforce Availability target for persons with disabilities (8%) by actively promoting the hiring of students and employees using various government-run employment programs aimed at persons with disabilities.
 - Polar Knowledge Canada’s Human Resources and Occupational Health and Safety teams will work together to improve tracking on accommodations, including:
 - Number of requests
 - Rejected/Refused requests (i.e., not approved)
 - Accommodation type (e.g., IT hardware/software, workspace, environment-related, personal support services, non-physical such as reduced work hours or change in duties)
 - Cost
 - Number of days from the request to full implementation of an accommodation
 - Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to conduct proactive consultations with employees on a regular basis seeking further feedback on the accessibility of our employment for people with disabilities (e.g., surveys, townhalls, working groups, etc.).

Results

Since the publication of Polar Knowledge Canada’s Accessibility Plan in 2023, no new barriers to employment have been identified. Over the review period, significant progress has been made in advancing accessibility and inclusion efforts related to employment, particularly in the areas of employment equity, data tracking, and recruitment initiatives.

Although a full Employment Equity program was not developed by end of 2023-2024, a major milestone was the release of Polar Knowledge Canada’s first 2022-2023 Employment Equity Annual Report in November 2023. This report provided valuable insights into workforce representation and laid the foundation for the development of Polar Knowledge Canada’s Employment Equity Plan, which is currently in progress and expected to be completed by July 31, 2025. In parallel, an internal campaign encouraged

employees to update their self-identification status as part of the Agency's transition to a new Human Resources Management System. This initiative has improved workforce representation data.

Polar Knowledge Canada has also made strides in recruitment efforts to increase the representation of persons with disabilities. Over the review period, the Agency has improved its workforce representation for persons with disabilities by 5%. To further enhance hiring practices, human resources professionals completed the [*Federal Public Service Inclusive Appointment Lens*](#) and leveraged resources such as the [*Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit*](#) (GCIntranet) and the [*Hiring Persons with Disabilities: Managers Toolkit*](#) (GCIntranet). These approaches have been promoted to hiring managers through recruitment strategies to encourage more inclusive hiring decisions.

In addition to recruitment and data initiatives, Polar Knowledge Canada has engaged with external partners to advance its accessibility strategies. In January 2024, consultations were held with the Health and Safety Officer at the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General to identify best practices for workplace accommodations. Further discussions with other government agencies in early 2024 helped inform the development of Polar Knowledge Canada's Employment Equity Plan by incorporating insights from organizations with similar accessibility priorities.

Through these ongoing efforts, Polar Knowledge Canada remains committed to fostering an inclusive and barrier-free workplace. Moving forward, the Agency will continue monitoring its progress, refining its employment equity strategies, and proactively engaging with employees to ensure that accessibility remains a core priority.

Built environment

Polar Knowledge Canada recognizes the importance of an accessible built environment for all employees. The Accessibility Plan, published on January 30, 2023, identified key barriers in the built environment related to physical and sensory accessibility. In Cambridge Bay, the natural environment presents challenges for individuals with disabilities when commuting to and from the office. In the Ottawa office, the open-concept design has raised concerns related to sensory barriers, including scents, flickering lights, temperature fluctuations, and background noise. Efforts have been made over the past two fiscal years to address these challenges and create a more inclusive and accommodating workspace.

Actions

- Polar Knowledge Canada will ensure every employee is provided a laptop and a phone with internet access. Additional accommodation requests (magnifying screen, ergonomic mouse) will also be tracked. In inclement weather, employees can tether the internet from their phone to their laptop at home. This removes the need for physical access to the Canadian High Arctic Research Station when it is difficult to commute.

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- Polar Knowledge Canada will ensure there are signs posted in all offices regarding the use of scents being prohibited. There will also be 'quiet rooms' available for staff to use in the event of a need to focus or work in solitude.
 - Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to consult with employees and seek feedback related to the built environment, to determine if there are any potential barriers for people with disabilities that have not been found or that arise in the future.
 - Facilities Management and Human Resource employees of Polar Knowledge Canada will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Built Environment](#) in order to further our understanding of the Government of Canada accessibility requirements to ensure that future service contracts include high standards for accessibility.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada has made meaningful progress in improving the accessibility of its built environment, ensuring that employees, regardless of physical or sensory needs, have an inclusive and accommodating workspace. Recognizing the challenges posed by the natural environment in Cambridge Bay and the sensory barriers in the Ottawa office, the Agency has taken concrete steps to address these concerns.

For example, to improve accessibility in Cambridge Bay, Polar Knowledge Canada has implemented remote work solutions that allow employees to remain productive during inclement weather. Every employee is now provided with a laptop and phone with internet access, allowing them to tether their internet connection and work from home when commuting is difficult. To support employees during extreme weather conditions, email notifications are sent to all staff in both Cambridge Bay and Ottawa with updates on inclement weather and guidance on remote work arrangements.

During the reporting period, Human Resources received accommodation requests, and of which were addressed and tracked.

In the Ottawa office, where sensory barriers such as scents, lighting, and background noise were identified, Polar Knowledge Canada has designated quiet rooms and meeting spaces for employees who require low-stimulation work environments. It also has accessible washrooms in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut and Ottawa, Ontario.

Employee engagement has remained a key focus, with consultations held in December 2023 to gather feedback on accessibility challenges. Polar Knowledge Canada's commitment to accessibility is also reflected in its Facilities Management and Human Resources teams, who have completed the Canada School of Public Service's Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Built Environment. This training has enhanced their understanding of Government of Canada accessibility requirements, ensuring that future service contracts integrate high accessibility standards.

Moving forward, Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to monitor its built environment, engage employees for feedback, and implement best practices to eliminate barriers and foster an accessible workplace for all.

Information and communication technologies

Polar Knowledge Canada is committed to ensuring accessibility in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). While no barriers were identified in this area in the Accessibility Plan published on January 30, 2023, action items were established to enhance accessibility for all employees, including persons with disabilities. These initiatives focus on continuous improvement to ensure that technology remains inclusive and accessible.

Actions

- Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to promote the existing services for accessibility, accommodations and adaptive computer technology offered through Shared Services Canada which provides services to help integrate employees with disabilities, injuries and ergonomic requirements and who require access to systems, programs, information, computers and computer resources.
- Information Management/Information Technology Team along with Human Resources will watch this Canada School of Public Service's [*Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Information Technologies*](#) to learn about the latest trends in the industry and share practical strategies to procure, design and implement accessible Information Technology from the start.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada remains committed to ensuring that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are accessible to all employees, including persons with disabilities. While no barriers related to ICT were identified in the Accessibility Plan published in January 2023, proactive steps have been taken to enhance accessibility and ensure that technological resources remain inclusive and adaptable to employee needs.

Throughout the review period, no new barriers to ICT accessibility were identified. However, Polar Knowledge Canada, has focused on improving the awareness and promotion of accessibility services.

The Agency continues to leverage Shared Services Canada's Accessibility, Accommodations, and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) services, which support employees requiring assistive technologies, ergonomic accommodations, and specialized access to digital tools and resources. In alignment with this initiative, two new accommodation requests were received, successfully addressed, and tracked, reinforcing Polar Knowledge Canada's commitment to ensuring that employees have the tools and resources necessary for an inclusive digital workplace.

Communication (non-information and communication technologies)

Ensuring accessible and inclusive communication is a priority for Polar Knowledge Canada. The Accessibility Plan, published on January 30, 2023, identified barriers related to the creation and dissemination of accessible documents and presentations, as not all employees have received training on accessible content design. Additionally, challenges in meetings, such as backlighting, hybrid participation, and background noise, were identified as barriers for employees with hearing or visual impairments. To address these issues, learning plans with mandatory training have been developed to improve accessible content creation, and training for managers will be introduced to support more inclusive meetings.

Actions

- The following learning material will be made mandatory for all employees beginning in fiscal year 2023-2024.
 - [Video: Making Documents Accessible](#).
 - Read this [Accessibility Guide](#) to learn how to create accessible documents.
 - Read POLAR's [Writing guide](#) to learn how to write in plain language.
- Polar Knowledge Canada has created and will continue to promote on an annual basis the [Document and content accessibility guide](#) as well as the  [Accessibility Guide](#) for accessible writing.
- Polar Knowledge Canada is developing a mini-Connexions blog series highlighting sections from their Accessibility Guide.
- Polar Knowledge Canada will promote the Canada School of Public Service's [Job aid: Planning Accessible Virtual Events](#) and this [Job aid: Promoting Inclusive Workplaces](#) to managers to help ensure that all meetings are inclusive and barrier free.
- The Communications Directorate along with Human Resources will watch this Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Communications](#) to ensure that our approach to communications meets or exceeds accessibility requirements and to help identify any potential barriers that currently exist that have not been identified.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada has made significant progress in enhancing accessible communication to ensure that all employees, including those with disabilities, can fully engage with workplace materials and discussions. Since the publication of the Accessibility Plan in January 2023, Polar Knowledge Canada has taken concrete steps to address barriers related to document accessibility, meeting inclusivity, and accessible training resources.

In January 2024, the Polar Knowledge Canada's Writing Guide was distributed to all employees, reinforcing best practices in clear, plain language communication. Another significant milestone was the development of an internal process for using closed captions and transcripts in both official languages for

all video content, ensuring accessibility for employees who are hearing impaired. This initiative strengthens Polar Knowledge Canada's ability to provide inclusive multimedia content and aligns with best practices in accessible communications.

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Ensuring accessibility in the procurement of goods, services, and facilities is a priority for Polar Knowledge Canada. The Accessibility Plan, published on January 30, 2023, did not identify specific barriers in this area. However, recognizing the importance of continuous improvement, action items have been established to enhance accessibility considerations in procurement processes.

Actions

- Facilities Management and Human Resources will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Built Environment](#) to further our understanding of the Government of Canada accessibility requirements to ensure that any future facility contracts are accessible by design, where possible, so that employees with disabilities can use them without adaptation.
- The procurement team and Human Resources will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Procurement](#) to learn about improving our procurement system using recommendations from the Public Service Accessibility Strategy, as well as read [Public Service & Procurement Canada's Accessible procurement information](#) to ensure that procurement opportunities in the future will have accessibility criteria incorporated from the beginning.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada has taken proactive steps to integrate accessibility considerations into its procurement processes, ensuring that the goods, services procured, and facilities meet or exceed Government of Canada accessibility standards. While no specific barriers were identified in the Accessibility Plan published in January 2023, Polar Knowledge Canada has focused on building internal expertise and adopting best practices to enhance accessibility in procurement decisions.

A key achievement was the completion of targeted accessibility training for employees involved in facilities management, procurement, and human resources. By December 2023, relevant staff members had successfully completed the Canada School of Public Service's Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series on both Built Environment and Procurement. These courses provided critical insights into accessible facility design and procurement strategies, equipping employees with the knowledge needed to embed accessibility criteria into future procurement and facility contracts.

Additionally, procurement employees continue to engage in accessibility-related learning opportunities as new training becomes available, reinforcing Polar Knowledge Canada's commitment to continuous improvement in accessible procurement practices.

Design and delivery of programs and services

Ensuring accessible and inclusive design and delivery of programs and services is a priority for Polar Knowledge Canada. While no barriers were identified in this area in the Accessibility Plan published on January 30, 2023, action items were established to enhance accessibility for all employees, including persons with disabilities.

Actions

- Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to consult with people with disabilities on the resources used to ensure our design and delivery of programs and services remain inclusive and barrier free.
- The Human Resources team will watch Canada School of Public Service's [Video: Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Programs and Services](#) to learn how to better design and deliver accessible programs and services and to integrate accessibility considerations early on in program design.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada remains committed to ensuring that programs and services are designed and delivered in an inclusive and accessible manner. While no specific barriers were identified in the Accessibility Plan published in January 2023, the Agency has taken proactive steps to enhance accessibility considerations and engage employees in continuous improvement efforts.

A key focus has been ongoing consultation with employees, including persons with disabilities, to identify potential accessibility challenges and refine existing resources. In November 2023, Polar Knowledge Canada conducted follow-up consultations with employees to assess whether any barriers had emerged and to gather feedback on how accessibility could be further strengthened.

To support accessibility-informed decision-making, Polar Knowledge Canada's Human Resources team completed the Canada School of Public Service's Spotlight on ACCESSibility Micro-Learning Series: Programs and Services in December 2023. This training provided insights into best practices for integrating accessibility considerations at the early stages of program design, ensuring that future initiatives are barrier-free from the outset.

Transportation

Polar Knowledge Canada remains committed to ensuring that transportation services are inclusive and barrier-free for all employees, including persons with disabilities. Since the publication of the Accessibility Plan in January 2023, no specific barriers for persons with disabilities related to transportation have been

identified. However, recognizing the importance of proactive monitoring, Polar Knowledge Canada has committed to assessing transportation resources on an ongoing basis to ensure accessibility standards are met.

Actions

- Polar Knowledge Canada will monitor the resources used to ensure our transportation is inclusive and barrier free for people with disabilities.

Results

Polar Knowledge Canada remains committed to ensuring that transportation services are inclusive and barrier free to people with disabilities. While no specific barriers were identified in the Accessibility Plan published in January 2023, the Agency has taken proactive steps to enhance accessibility considerations and engage employees in continuous improvement efforts.

In January 2024, Polar Knowledge Canada successfully implemented a new Directive on Light-Duty Vehicle Fleet Management to enhance the oversight and accessibility of vehicle usage. This Directive ensures that the Agency maintains a structured and efficient approach to managing its light-duty vehicle fleet while considering accessibility needs.

Consultations

Polar Knowledge Canada conducted consultations with our subject matter experts from each of the areas described under section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*. Polar Knowledge Canada will continue to conduct consultations, track progress of action items, and monitor for new barriers to improve our accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Feedback

In 2024, input to this progress report was gathered from key stakeholders across the Communications, OSH, Facilities, Information Technology, Human Resources and Procurement Directorates.

Feedback from employees regarding delays in the processing of accommodations requests were addressed on an individually basis. HR closely monitored each case to ensure that the necessary work was initiated, financial approvals were obtained, and the IT equipment was delivered in a timely manner.