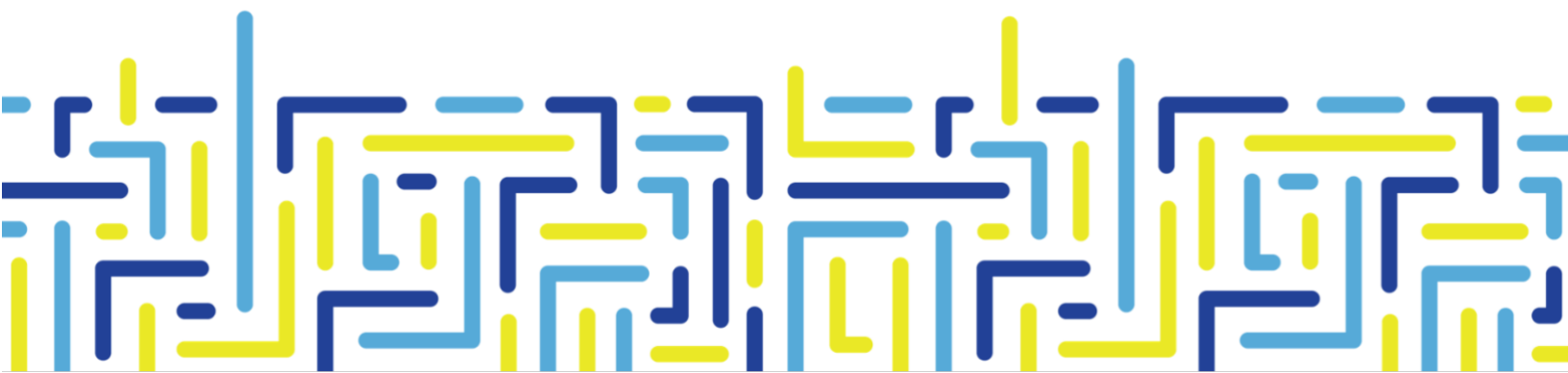# Accessibility Standards Canada

2023 Accessibility Progress Report

December 15, 2023

Introduction

Accessibility Standards Canada published its first [Accessibility Plan](#) in 2022. The organization is required to publish a progress report in 2023 and another in 2024. In 2025, it will publish an updated plan that builds on the first three years. To prepare the plan and these progress reports, we must consult Canadians with disabilities.

This report presents the progress made by Accessibility Standards Canada to implement its [2023 to 2025 Accessibility Plan](#).

Overall, the implementation of our [Accessibility Plan](#) is progressing very well. Of the 24 actions identified in our three-year plan, 92% are either completed (8), or ongoing (14). The remaining 2 actions are to be completed in 2024 and 2025.

We received positive feedback and high levels of satisfaction from people who interact with our organization. The consultation led in October 2023 also identified some barriers and areas for improvement, which we will be addressing.

General

Alternate formats

You can request alternate formats of this report, for example:

- print or large print
- American Sign Language / Langue des signes québécoise / Indigenous Sign Language video
- Braille
- audio format
- electronic format compatible with adaptive technology intended to assist people with disabilities.

To request alternate formats of this report:

- call us at 1-833-854-7628
- email us at [info.accessibility.standards-](#)

normes.accessibilite.info@canada.gc.ca

Consultations

In line with the *Accessible Canada Act* and *Accessible Canada Regulations*, we held a consultation on our progress. The consultation took place from October 17 to 30, 2023.

Consultation results will be shared, along with this progress report, to all employees of the organization. This will allow us to make further adjustments to maintain the high level of accessibility of our organization. Comments will also be taken into consideration when updating our Accessibility Plan.

Who we consulted

We understand the problems that arise from consulting the same groups too often. Because of this, we chose to consult specific people who often interact with us. These groups include:

- employees of Accessibility Standards Canada
- members of the Board of Directors
- members of our technical committees who are responsible for drafting accessibility standards
- recipients of research funding from our Grants and Contributions Program

We sent an invitation to complete our survey to a total of 265 people.

Consultation methods

We sent the survey invitation to participants by email. This was the most direct way to reach our target audience. Participants could complete the survey online or by:

- email
- telephone (including video relay service)
- American Sign Language or Langue des signes québécoise (by sending a video by email)

We asked participants to respond to 18 questions about their interactions with us. Participants had the possibility to write comments on many questions.

The questions were organized into five sections. A summary of the responses received follows.

What we heard

Section 1 – How do you interact with us?

We received a total of 34 responses. We are not providing a breakdown of responses by targeted groups to help keep responses anonymous.

Section 2 – Have you experienced any barriers to accessibility in your interactions with Accessibly Standards Canada in any of the 7 areas below?

Employment

3% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- Employee does not have the tools needed to do their work in an equitable way.

Built environment (our organization)

3% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- The organization should use pedestrian signs.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

24% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- Accessibility needs are not being met in documents.
- Employees need more training on accessibility and formatting for documents.
- IT is unable to solve technology barriers.

Communication with us (other than ICT)

15% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- Prefer ability to speak with employees directly.
- Delays in receiving responses from generic email. Delays after leaving a voicemail.
- Delays in obtaining sign language interpreters in technical committee work.

Program and service delivery (our Grants and Contributions Program and services)

15% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- Templates and forms are not accessible enough.
- The application process is difficult for Quebec applicants to the Grants and Contributions Program.
- The application process is too long.

Transportation (finding our office and accessible parking spaces)

3% of respondents reported facing barriers. Comments included:

- Public transportation lacks accessibility features.

Procurement (buying goods and services)

No barriers or comments reported.

Section 3 – Progress Towards Our Accessibility Plan: How are we doing overall in implementing our plan in each priority area?

We include participants who chose "Satisfactory", "Very Satisfactory", or "Outstanding" as being satisfied. Participants who responded "Poor" or "Unsatisfactory" are counted as being unsatisfied.

Employment

To enhance recruitment, retention, training, advancement, job satisfaction and support of employees with disabilities.

82% of respondents were satisfied. Comments received from those unsatisfied included:

- employment opportunities

- accessibility passport

Built Environment (our office)

To offer the highest level of accommodation for employees and guests, including the Board of Directors and Technical Committee members, with disabilities to use the facility based on available technology and standards.

100% of respondents were satisfied.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Employees and stakeholders can use ICT to engage in their work.

85% of respondents were satisfied. Comments received from those unsatisfied included:

- Technology provided to do work in the office is not accessible.
- IT security firewalls are creating barriers and interfering with accessibility.
- The process for making IT service requests for accessibility products.

Communication with us (other than ICT)

Employees and stakeholders have the knowledge they need to do their work.

90% of respondents were satisfied. Comments received from those unsatisfied included:

- Employees are not prepared to work with people with different disabilities.
- Not all employees have the same understanding of or access to training for making documents accessible.

Program and service delivery (our Grants and Contributions Program and services)

Canadians can access and experience our programs.

82% of respondents were satisfied. Comments received from those unsatisfied included:

- The application process for people in Quebec is challenging because of extra steps.

Transportation (finding our office and accessible parking spaces)

Employees and guests can access our premises autonomously.

94% of respondents were satisfied. Comments received from those unsatisfied included:

- More signage and wayfinding to office required in the mall where the office is located.
- Poor public transportation options to get to the office.
- Wish for a new elevator closer to the office due to parking lot change.

Procurement (buying goods and services)

To embed accessibility into our procurement philosophy.

100% of respondents were satisfied. However, some areas for improvement were identified:

- Frustration with the need to require IT support for accessible programs.
- Sometimes accessibility of training is not met when provided by outside groups.
- Accessibility needs are not always assessed prior to purchasing equipment or products.

Section 4: Further Suggestions – Do you have any further suggestions or feedback to share about our Accessibility Plan, the accessibility of our organization, or otherwise?

Comments included:

- Completing online forms is sometimes difficult. Information must be entered in a specific format, but the error messages are hard to find.
- Online fillable forms are not always accessible to screen readers.
- Feedback from this survey and other accessibility feedback processes must be welcomed to remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Section 5: Other Demographic Questions

- 53% of respondents identified as people with a disability, including:
    - physical
    - mental
    - cognitive
    - learning
    - communication
    - sensory
- There was representation from most regions of Canada. The territories had no representation.
- 88% of respondents lived in urban areas and 12% of respondents lived in rural areas.

Other feedback received

We posted our [Accessibility feedback form](#) in December 2022. Canadians can use this form to share feedback on:

- our [Accessibility Plan](#)
- accessibility barriers faced when trying to access our services and information, on any of our platforms

We received 10 submissions from December 2022 to October 2023. Canadians submitted their feedback in different ways:

- 6 used our [online feedback form](#)
- 3 sent us feedback by [email](#)
- 1 sent us feedback using our [contact form](#)

Six of the submissions came from external organizations and three came from individuals.

The submissions mostly include suggestions for us to consider in our planning. They cover the following areas:

Employment

- Suggestion to provide American Sign Language for interviews and job orientation, as well as training for persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Suggestion to meet other accommodations.

- Suggestion to include employees with disabilities in the hiring process and on interview panels.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

- Suggestion to consider sensory and environmental disabilities related to ICT use in our office. This could include possible accommodations or technology solutions.
- Suggestion to communicate the website accessibility standards that we will meet in our [Accessibility Plan](). For example, Web Compliance Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA standards, and consideration for level AAA standards for sign language.
- Suggestions to change images and fonts of some pages of our website.
  - The organization already fixed or committed to fix almost all the issues except where the changes would have created new barriers.

Built environment and ICT

- Suggestion to ensure our office and ICT are accessible to the Deaf and Deaf Blind who use alternative or augmentative forms of communication. For example, using Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) in sign language, in the reception area.

Communication with us (other than ICT)

- Prefer ability for calls to be answered and to speak with employees directly.
- We received feedback that our website may not be fully accessible. Suggestion to consider testing by people with disabilities who use different technologies.
- Suggestion to consider a new barrier for the accessibility plan: lack of experience and training in sign languages and Deaf culture.

Program and Service Delivery

- Suggestion to include sign language videos within the definition of accessible formats.

- Suggestion to add services in our action item for things that are purchased for employees that should be assessed for accessibility.

Internal feedback

We received feedback from 2 employees who experienced delays in getting their accommodations. In both cases, the challenge seemed to be the time to obtain technologies from our service provider. We will continue to work with this partner to reduce these delays in the future.

Overview of progress

In 2023, we started to implement our 2023 to 2025 Accessibility Plan.

We started by further defining how we would define success. For each commitment, we:

- clarified who is accountable
- established a deadline
- developed indicators
- started to monitor progress

Additionally, in 2023, we:

- reviewed and improved our corporate Accessibility Policy
- launched our virtual Centre of Expertise on Accessibility. This one-stop shop makes our standards and the research we fund easy to access.

Progress under the Accessible Canada Act's 7 priority areas

Employment

Barrier 1: Inflexible and often inaccessible application and hiring procedures within Government.

Action 1: Applicants can submit documents to us in their preferred format. **Completed.**

- All accommodation requests are assessed. We accept job applications that are sent via alternate formats when regular formats are inaccessible.

Action 2: We will provide the name and position of the person to contact for more information about the job poster. **Completed.**

- We are now systematically providing the name and position of the person to contact for more information about the job poster.

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of recruitment processes that include the name and position of the person to contact for more information about the job poster.	100%	100%

Action 3: We will provide accommodations throughout the application and hiring process. **Ongoing.**

- We streamlined the process to make it easier for candidates and employees to ask for accommodations. This has increased our ability to provide accommodations in the context of the return to the office.

- We are systematically providing accommodations throughout the application and hiring processes.

Indicators	Target state	2023 data
% of staffing processes where accommodations were offered at each step.	100%	100%
Average time to get accommodations.	1 month	To be measured in 2024

% of Board members obtaining the accommodations they need for meetings.	100%	100%

Barrier 2: Not reaching out to potential candidates with disabilities.

Action: Our human resources department will fine tune the recruitment strategy to broaden our talent pool to include more people with disabilities. **Ongoing.**

- Hiring managers are now required to consider the use of employment equity criteria when establishing their hiring strategy. This includes considering hiring from existing public service pools of candidates having self-identified as a people with disability.

Indicators	Target state	2023 data
% of employees who self-identify as having a disability.	15%	28.5%
Number of employees who self-identify as having a disability who were offered promotions or acting opportunities at Accessibility Standards Canada or within the Government of Canada.	5	To be measured in 2024.

Barrier 3: Using outdated or inappropriate language when speaking about people with disabilities.

Action 1: We will continue to educate employees, especially those who are new to the organization, about disability awareness and appropriate terminology. **To be completed in 2024.**

- Our employees are all required to complete the training on "Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility".

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of employees who completed the training on "Addressing Disability Inclusion and Barriers to Accessibility".	100%	Training started at the end of 2023. Completion will be tracked in 2024.

Action 2: We will make inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility allyship (IDEA) as an organization-wide competency. **Ongoing**

- As reported for the previous action, we integrated training on accessibility, disability inclusion and plain language in our list of mandatory training for all employees.

- Additionally, our Human Resources team hosted a presentation on the Accessibility Passport for all employees. The Passport is a tool that helps create an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities and for all public servants. Using the Passport, employees document the barriers they face at work. The employee and their manager collaborate to determine effective solutions the employee needs to succeed. By encouraging employees to use the tool, we facilitate the accommodation process. It also means that employees don't have to re-explain their needs multiple times. The passport travels with the employee. This facilitates mobility between departments.

Barrier 4: Transitioning from education to employment for youth with disabilities comes with many challenges.

Action: Add accessible employment for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to work as a priority area for our research funding program. **Completed.**

- As part of our grants and contributions program, we funded 7 research projects that focus on accessible employment. Refer to the programs and services section for the action on employment for

youth with disabilities.

- Our organization also started a pilot project to implement our draft employment standard. The goal of CAN-ASC-1.1 Standard on Employment is to address work-related barriers caused by both individual actions and systems. This standard envisions a work environment that is accessible and inclusive. It imagines a place that is free of discrimination, regardless of whether a worker has any disabilities.

The built environment

Barrier 1: Certain elements of the office may not yet be fully accessible to everyone, whether that be employees or guests.

Action 1: We will implement recommendations from employees taking part in the pilot return to the office project. **Completed**

- In August 2022, we finally welcomed employees into our new accessible office. It was built to be the most accessible workplace possible. It applies universal design principles. The space has many accessibility features to accommodate the needs of our employees.

Action 2: We will feature our facility to other government departments and agencies to encourage a higher level of accessibility in future fit ups or new builds. **Ongoing**

- Our office showcases innovative ideas that other departments, organizations, or building designers would consider implementing in their own offices. To promote our new accessible office space, we created a web page with many options. Visitors can choose a 3D virtual tour or a video about the office's accessible features. Both options include close captions and Sign language interpretation.

Barrier 2: Employees and guests are unable to locate the office in the shopping mall (initially listed under the "Transport" area)**.**

Action: We will provide clear instructions and have an employee meet guests at the main entrance and guide them to the office entrance. **Completed.**

- New employees are provided a tour of the office on their first day. Guests are provided with instructions and are accompanied by an employee.

Barrier 3: Insufficient parking or lack of accessible parking spaces nearby (initially listed under the "Transport" area)**.**

Action: There is a commercial parking lot next to the office. We will ask management to add additional accessible parking spaces requiring a tag. **Completed.**

- The number of accessible parking was increased to 8. This provides accessible parking to employees.

Indicator	Target	2023 data
Number of accessible parking spaces available.	8	8

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Barrier 1: Lack of knowledge or experience in the latest accessibility technology, which is always evolving.

Action: We will provide training opportunities on accessible ICT.

This action was modified for:

IT employees have the resources they need to provide accessible ICT. **Ongoing.**

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of employees providing ICT or advice on ICT who access	75%	100%

training on accessible ICT.		

Barrier 2: Procurement of software that is sometimes incompatible with the needs of people with disabilities.

Action 1: We will coordinate software procurement in consultation with the intended user. **Ongoing.**

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of completed requests for specialized software.	100%	100%

Action 2: During the onboarding process, we ask employees if they need accessible ICT (modified for greater clarity). **Ongoing.**

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of employees being asked if they need specialized ICT during the onboarding process.	100%	100%

Communication, other than ICT

Barrier: Employees and stakeholders sometimes experience inaccessible information and cannot complete their work.

Action1: The communications team will stay informed about new communications tools that could help us provide accessible information to employees. **Ongoing.**

- We participate in many communities of practice related to accessibility. For example, we co-chair the Community of Practice for Accessible Communications. This group now has more than 400 members from all government departments and organizations.

- We worked with various partners to solve issues or answer specific questions related to accessibility. This includes testing solutions with assistive technologies like screen readers.

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
Number of relevant (accessible communications) communities of practice we take part in.	3	4

Action 2: We will monitor feedback and consult stakeholders on which format(s) and support(s) would meet their needs (modified for greater clarity). **Ongoing.**

- We made targeted efforts to reach the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. They produced many sign language videos which translate or summarize web pages on our website.

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of active offers for alternate formats for new engaging web pages.	100%	100%

Action 3: We will continue to provide employee training on plain language and making documents accessible. **Ongoing.**

- The organization took an engagement that, whenever this is possible, all public documents and documents going to the Board of Directors will be in plain language (grade 8 reading level).
- We started to systematically review all documents for the public to ensure they are written in plain language grade level 8 or lower.
- We introduced mandatory training on plain language to all employees. This initiative will increase accessibility of our written material.
- We created a suite of accessible templates for employees.

- We continued to learn from the 2022 accessibility review of our website. This includes:
  - improving our process for adding new content to the site
  - improving the overall usability (user experience) of our web pages
  - revisiting existing content with an accessibility lens

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of employees who completed training on plain language.	90%	95%

Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Barrier: Accessibility is not always considered during the procurement process due to lack of knowledge and understanding

Action1: We will equip employees involved in the procurement of accessible products and services with knowledge to understand the needs of people with disabilities. **(Action combined with action 2 below).**

Action 2: We will seek services from providers who have values in line with ours whenever possible.

For greater clarity and to combine with the previous action, this action was modified for:

We will embed accessibility considerations in our procurement processes. **To be completed in upcoming years.**

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
% of procurement processes where accessibility was considered.	100%	To be measured in 2024.

Action 3: Ensure all employees have the right equipment and products to be at their best. Replace items that are not accessible if possible (modified for greater clarity). **Ongoing.**

- We improved the accessibility of the tables included in one of our requests for supply arrangement.

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
Number of callouts to all employees to ask them to report on any new barriers faced at work.	4 per year	To be measured in 2024.

Action 4: We will include information on the *Accessible Canada Act*, disability, accessibility and human rights in our onboarding training. **Completed.**

- We decided to add training on these topics in our list of mandatory trainings for all employees.

Design and delivery of programs and services

Barrier: Shared information is not always provided in formats that meet the needs of all users.

Action1: We will include accessibility requirements for accommodations in the Standards Development Operating Procedures used by employees to support the technical committees (reworded for better accuracy). **Ongoing.**

- The Standards Development Operating Procedures include a clause on accessibility of standards documents.

- Members of technical committees have provided positive feedback about the organization's positive and inclusive environment. The surveys indicate that the Standard Development team meets technical committee members' initial and evolving accommodation requirements.

Indicators	Target state	2023 data
Timeframe to offer accommodations to technical committee members.	To be established in 2024	To be measured in 2024.
Level of satisfaction of recipients with the accessibility of our Grants and Contributions Program.	70%	50%
Level of satisfaction of technical committee members with the accessibility of our processes.	70%	71%

Action 2: We will provide guidance materials in plain language. **Ongoing.**

- In 2023, we ensured our [funding program](#) documents were in plain language.

- A brief plain language overview is provided for each of our standard.

Indicator	Target state	2023 data
Reading level of documents for applicants to the Grants and Contributions program.	Grade 8 reading level or lower	Grade 8

Action 3: We will publish standards in accessible formats. **Completed.**

- We made our documents for technical committee members more accessible.

- We published all our standards in three accessible formats: PDF, word, and HTML.

- We improved the process to fill out forms for our technical

committee's members. We started using DocuSign. That improved the accessibility for all users, including those using a screen reader.

- We made an active offer for alternate formats or accommodations during the call for expressions of interest period for our grants and contributions research program.

- We allowed grants and contributions applicants to include accommodation-related expenses in their project budget.

Action 4: We will conduct future surveys with employees, technical committee members and the Board of Directors. Through the survey results, we will see how we can improve accessibility in the design and delivery of our programs and services. **Ongoing.**

- In 2022, we introduced an annual survey of our technical committees. The survey includes questions on overall satisfaction with their contribution to programs and their communications with the organization. We ask them to comment on opportunities to be more accessible.

- In October 2023, we consulted with employees, Board of Directors, members of technical committees and grants and contributions' recipients. The feedback will be taken into consideration in how we can improve accessibility in the design and delivery of our programs and services.

Transport

Our Accessibility Plan initially identified 2 barriers for the "Transport" area. It was later determined that those barriers fell in the "Built Environment" area, and they were moved under that area. As a result, the organization does not have any barriers to address for the transport area.

Feedback process description

Feedback from the public

We value the lived experience of people with disabilities, and we aim to meet the highest level of accessibility.

You can submit feedback on:

- this report
- our 2023 to 2025 Accessibility Plan
- any other barriers you encounter when dealing with Accessibility Standards Canada:
  - the accessibility of our services, offices, website, support to technical committee's members as well as the Board of Directors, and any other issue

Your feedback is important and necessary, and it will:

- be used to advance the objectives of our Accessibility Plan
- be used to improve our overall accessibility
- be included in our progress reports

How to submit feedback

The Human Resources Manager is responsible for receiving feedback from the public. We will acknowledge all accessibility feedback we receive within 48 hours, except for anonymous feedback.

To submit your feedback, you can:

- Use the online form
- Email us: mailto:info.accessibility.standards-normes.accessibilite.info@canada.gc.ca
- Call us: 1-833-854-7628
- Use Video Relay Services, which are free (American Sign Language or Langue des signes québécoise)
- Send us mail at:

  Accessibility Standards Canada
  320, St-Joseph Boulevard
  Suite 246
  Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

If you wish to remain anonymous, don't include your name when submitting your feedback.