

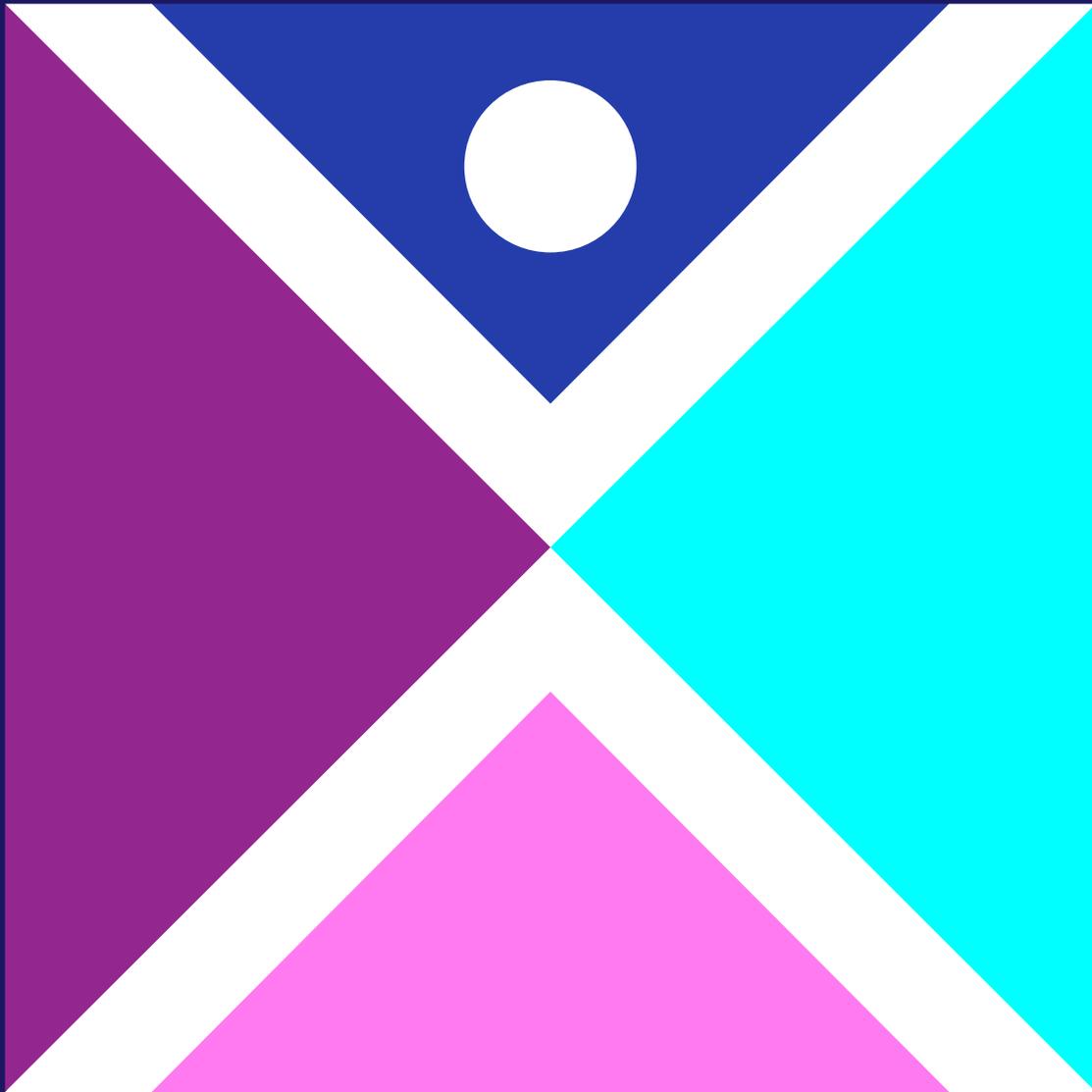


Natural Resources
Canada

Ressources naturelles
Canada

Accessibility Action Plan

2022—
2025



YEAR 1 PROGRESS REPORT

Canada

Aussi disponible en français : Plan d'action sur l'accessibilité de Ressources naturelles Canada 2022-2025

Cat. No. M2-26E-PDF (En ligne) ISSN 2817-8904

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Message from the Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister

We are pleased to share the first annual progress report following the publication of the 2022-2025 Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan. The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan is a comprehensive three-year action plan that guides the department in embedding accessibility into its fabric, better serving all Canadians in its process. The Plan also finds measurable and tangible solutions to make the department more accessible by design. In this progress report, we are re-examining the nine priority areas and assessing the advancements made, acknowledging that true accessibility and inclusion require commitment on an individual level. We also examine the feedback we have received on our efforts and the lessons learned about how we can improve this process further.

We are proud of the accomplishments that have been achieved in the last year. However, as we take stock of our achievements, we recognize the challenges that persist. We remain committed to refining our strategies, engaging with diverse perspectives, and leveraging innovative technologies to further advance accessibility in our department. As we mentioned in Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan publication, for lasting change to take root, we know we must not only alter the way we think about accessibility, but also how we act towards it.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of those who have contributed their expertise, passion and dedication to this cause. Your unwavering commitment has been instrumental in propelling us forward, and we will continue to work towards being a department that is inclusive in all aspects of our work. The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action





Plan and its progress continue to be produced through engagement with Natural Resources Canada's AccessAbility Network and extensive consultation with subject matter experts across all offices of primary interest. To achieve meaningful results, we must include those who are most affected.

We encourage you to read this report, not only to appreciate the progress that we have made, but also to gain insight as to what we can improve upon. Together, we are shaping a legacy of inclusion and accessibility for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Michael Vandergrift

Deputy Minister, Natural Resources Canada

Jeff Labonté

Associate Deputy Minister, Natural Resources Canada

Executive Summary

The 2022-2025 **Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan** responds to the *Accessible Canada Act*, which requires all Government of Canada entities to present a three-year accessibility plan to achieve a Canada without barriers on or before January 1, 2040. The plan is a commitment to act and make sustainable progress in the area of accessibility by building a culture of inclusion that values diversity, combats discrimination and prevents future **barriers** in the workplace. As part of the commitment within the plan, Natural Resources Canada has co-developed an implementation strategy with clear timelines, activities, and accountability. A crucial aspect of this process has been ongoing consultations with Natural Resources Canada's AccessAbility Network in preparation of this legislated progress report.

The high level of engagement with the network continues to be an excellent example of how collaboration and co-development lead to meaningful dialogue and significant commitments that meets the department's specific needs.

This 2022-2023 annual progress report is the first report of its kind to highlight the advancements Natural Resources Canada has made in accessibility. Of the nine (9) priority areas, some of the key progress is included in this progress report.

Natural Resources Canada will continue to work with the AccessAbility Network as well as other internal stakeholders and governing bodies to track continued progress related to all elements of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan.





Consultation

Natural Resources Canada engaged in consultation with a variety of stakeholders during the first year of implementing of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan and during the development of the progress report. Many of these groups were specifically composed of persons with diverse abilities. The groups consulted include:

THE NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council was one of the main avenues for consultation at the department. The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council is the result of collaboration between the AccessAbility Network, the Human Resources Branch and the Office for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility. When the department published its accessibility plan, the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council was a key partner; therefore, the membership reviewed the terms of reference to better support the implementation. The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council membership met virtually, monthly, and invited offices of primary interest to present on their progress. The meeting invitations were sent to all members of the AccessAbility Network allowing them to hear firsthand about ongoing initiatives, ask questions, and provide comments.

NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA'S EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Natural Resources Canada's Executive Oversight Committee was established following the publication of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan. The membership is composed of a responsible Executive for each priority area. The quarterly meetings serve to assess the plan's progress and to offer assistance in addressing any outstanding questions related to each priority area. Additionally, these meetings inform and shape future discussions with the teams responsible for implementing actions within each priority area of the plan.

CONSULTATION CAMPAIGN

Natural Resources Canada conducted a four-week, department-wide consultation campaign in the early summer 2023. The campaign was co-managed by the Human Resources Branch and the AccessAbility network and began with an internal announcement through the department's weekly newsletter. To accommodate a variety of individuals, employees could provide written feedback, participate in a live virtual consultation event in the official language of choice, or both. For both the written feedback and the live consultation sessions, the Human Resources Branch prepared anonymous feedback options to create a safer space and promote more honest feedback.

EXTERNAL REVIEW

Natural Resources Canada obtained an external review of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan and its implementation strategy by an external consultant with expertise in the area of lived experience and accessibility. The review and its accompanying report were used to validate the importance and feasibility of the actions Natural Resources Canada chose to focus on. The report was circulated through the executive oversight committee members as it included recommendations for future accessibility plans for their advanced consideration.

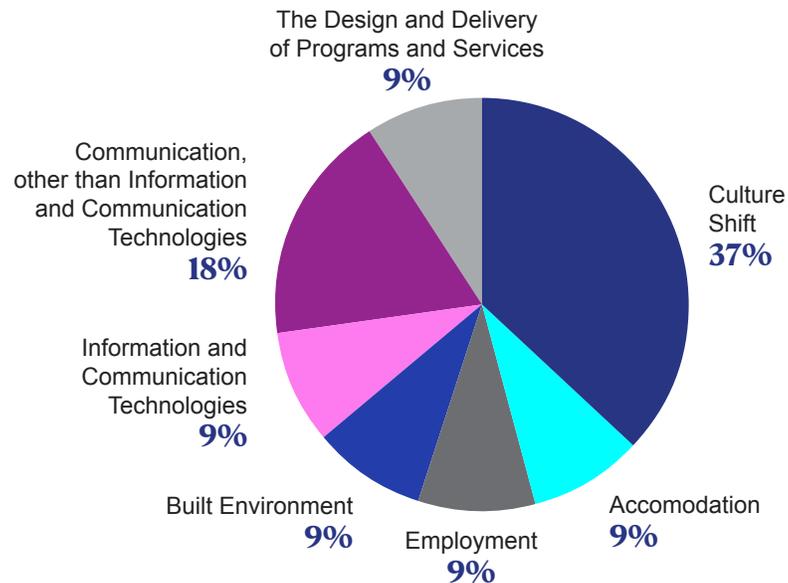




Feedback

FEEDBACK STATISTICS BY PRIORITY AREA

Note that this is a combination of feedback received through the departmental methods and through offices of primary interest.



FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Below is a snapshot of the feedback received within the first year of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan. This feedback relates to the implementation of our accessibility plan and the barriers to accessibility being faced at Natural Resources Canada.

Culture Shift

- The networks expressed their desire for a higher degree of consultation and involvement in the implementation of the accessibility plan.
- Balancing official languages requirements with accessible meeting practices is necessary to address potential barriers to accessibility.

Accommodation

- The accommodations process can be long and restrictive. Numerous comments have highlighted challenges in obtaining full-time remote work as an accommodation.
- The accommodation process requires clarification for employees and managers. Both employees and managers remain unclear on the logistics of the process itself.
- Concerns have been raised pertaining to the hardship of providing medical evidence for full-time telework requests.

Employment

- Pre-existing stereotypes for job requirements need to be addressed before staffing positions.
- Platforms used for recruitment should be tested for common accessibility barriers before being implemented.

The built environment

- Those with mobility restrictions have difficulty navigating the physical work environment due to the age and infrastructure of the existing buildings. Reports indicate that renovation or maintenance announcements are made after work has already begun; therefore, not adhering to the minimum lead time required to be given to employees.
- Concerns regarding safety and maintenance at Natural Resources Canada office buildings.
- Inadequate compliance with and enforcement of the workplace scent directive is a matter of concern.





Information and Communication Technologies

- Some users encountered challenges when trying to access technical systems.

Communications, other than information and communication technologies

- All speakers should present at a moderate pace to ensure understanding for all.

The design and delivery of programs and services

- Communications should be in plain language to enhance accessibility.

The procurement of goods, services and facilities

- Some external products pose accessibility difficulties.

Transport

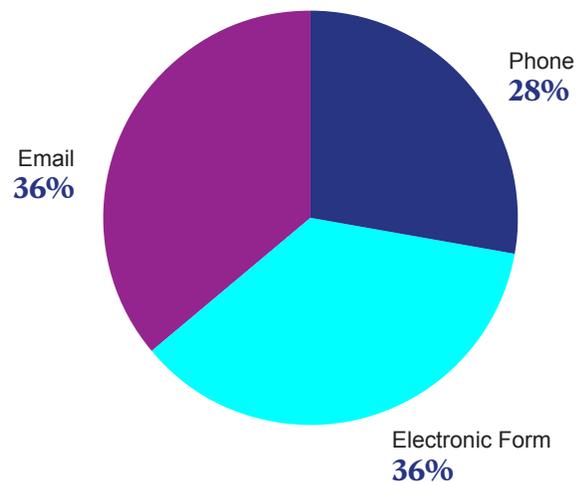
- Travel forms requiring a different vehicle for accommodations necessitate repeated justification and managerial approval.
- Managers may lack clarity on procedures when employees require accessibility accommodations for work-related vehicles. Insufficient training or guidance for managers could lead to unfavorable responses when they encounter potential financial constraints in addressing the required vehicle modifications or special leasing arrangements.

The identified feedback has been addressed, and subsequent actions have been initiated in collaboration with the relevant primary offices to ensure the clarity of next steps in addressing this feedback.

Evaluating our feedback measures

Natural Resources Canada published its accessibility feedback procedures. We allow for anonymous or identified feedback by mail, phone, electronic phone, and email. From the time the procedures were published, people used the different measures at the following frequency:

FEEDBACK MEASURES USED



The designated recipients for accessibility feedback noticed that the official departmental mechanisms, such as the “Contact us” form on our website and the official e-mail address for inquiries, were not used frequently. Therefore, HRB organized a learning session for offices of primary interest (OPIs). This learning session provided OPIs with information on how to identify, respond to and store accessibility feedback that they might receive directly.

As part of the consultation process, employees were given the chance to provide feedback on barriers created by the departmental feedback mechanisms. According to the anonymous survey results and the consultation sessions, the most common barrier(s) included a lack of awareness of the departmental feedback tools and concerns surrounding anonymity.





HOW WE ARE TAKING FEEDBACK INTO CONSIDERATION:

Feedback is immediately shared with OPIs when it is received through the above-noted methods. Each office is responsible for monitoring and responding to the feedback specific to their team and reporting on the progress made.

The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council has also reviewed its practices to be more responsive to feedback being received. The co-chairs of the Council meet monthly to discuss emerging priorities and challenges based on feedback. After this discussion, the secretariat of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council invites offices of primary interest to present and hold an open discussion with the membership to decide how to best address feedback.

Finally, our implementation strategy, which has more specific timelines and activities to support the commitments in each priority area, will undergo an annual review to incorporate the feedback received.

Priority Areas

Culture Shift

SUMMARY

Natural Resources Canada recognizes that although employees may want to improve accessibility and become more inclusive of persons with diverse abilities; historically, there has been a lack of knowledge in how to do so. We continue to work on developing and maintaining the information and proper tools to move beyond a culture of minimal compliance and make it possible for all of us to create a culture of accessibility.

Please note that while the *Accessible Canada Act* uses the term “persons with disabilities,” we will be using the term “persons with diverse abilities” throughout this report. As part of the culture change element of this initiative, the positive connotations of the latter term are more representative of the perspective of Natural Resources Canada going forward.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. **Recognize ableism:**

- i. We have implemented an exit survey. This will allow us to collect information about the culture, including the perceptions of accessibility from employees leaving the organization.

2. **Increase awareness:**

- i. The Living Library was an event held in June 2023 where employees had the opportunity to have a one-on-one conversation with a volunteer to learn about their personal lived experiences. This event showcased meaningful representation, that is, 10% of volunteers with diverse abilities.





- ii. Numerous presentations on this topic have been delivered at management meetings and governance committee meetings over the past year. These meetings have included the recent Public Service Employment Survey results with regards to accommodations.
- iii. The department has introduced an executive committee dedicated to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility as part of the oversight mechanisms for the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan progress.
- iv. An Ombudsman office is being created within the department in the area of health and wellness. The position of the Ombudsman will be staffed in the following months.

3. Network support:

- i. Since 2022, various employee networks, including the AccessAbility Network, have presented to the Senior Management Committee, and held formal meetings with Deputy Ministers. The Accessibility, Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity team in the Human Resources branch along with the Office for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility have provided increased support for the network over the course of this year. The co-chairs of these networks have been officially introduced across the department through information sessions held in late 2022 and early 2023.

4. Data literacy:

- i. Data literacy resources and a data dictionary have been published on the intranet.

We continue to work towards the prioritization of accessibility in the department and to have Natural Resources Canada employees understand:

- Accommodation is only one aspect of accessibility.
- Why universal accessibility by design matters.
- How to make the department more accessible and inclusive.

We also want employees with diverse abilities to develop an increased sense of worth, belonging, and purpose.

Accommodation

SUMMARY

The shift towards remote and hybrid work have shown the importance of flexibility and accommodation in optimizing inclusion and adopting a positive workplace culture.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Communicate Accommodation Centre of Expertise processes to employees:

- i. The development of the intranet pages is now finalized, in collaboration with the AccessAbility network, and the Accommodation Centre of Expertise is actively working alongside the Communications team to make the pages more user-friendly and accessible. Information about the Accommodations Centre of Expertise and the contact information are included in the onboarding package for all new employees.
- ii. The Accommodations Centre of Expertise continues to collaborate with the Technology Accessibility Centre to improve the accommodation process for employees who require assistance with their computer and workstation environment.





iii. In the past year, the demand for the Technology Accessibility Centre services, particularly in the regions, has significantly increased. This surging demand is a result of the centre's effective and comprehensive virtual assessment services available in all Natural Resources Canada work locations. The Technology Accessibility Centre maintains a two-business-day service standard for providing a comprehensive assessment report.

2. Increase awareness:

- i. An increasing number of accommodation requests have been received through the proper channels, indicating a growing awareness among employees and managers about the formal process for requesting accommodations.
- ii. The promotion of the Accommodation Centre of Expertise and its services has experienced delays due to the aforementioned surge in accommodation requests. The Accommodation Centre of Expertise continues to collaborate with the communications team to plan the promotion of their services.
- iii. Internal monitoring includes a metric on full-time teleworkers related to accommodations, which allows Natural Resources Canada to have the data to support this significant percentage going forward.

3. Increase support:

- i. A mechanism for tracking all accommodation requests has been implemented.
- ii. Natural Resources Canada executives have been empowered to support workplace accommodation measures by including accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equity objectives in their 2022 2023 performance management agreements.

- iii. An additional full-time employee will be added to the Technology Accessibility Centre, which will help manage the increased demand for their services.
- iv. A service agreement has been implemented with Shared Services Canada and its Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program to expand the range of services that can be offered to Natural Resources Canada employees.

4. Reduce delays:

- i. The GC Workplace Accessibility Passport is a tool available to public servants that contains all the necessary information to facilitate a smooth transition from one workplace to another without having to ask for an accommodation measure each time. The Passport is being promoted by advisors within the Accommodations Centre of Expertise and over the intranet, and the Accommodations Centre of Expertise will host training sessions on the topic.
- ii. The Technology Accessibility Centre continues to provide a variety of services to reduce or eliminate barriers presented by the standard computer environment. We continue to work towards outlining a simplified, flexible and user-centric accommodation process that addresses a broad range of situations. We plan to pursue creative and flexible solutions and provide timely and adequate accommodation solutions in a safe manner and in an environment free of stigma or fear of repercussion.





Employment

SUMMARY

Natural Resources Canada is committed to being a department that represents and includes the diverse identities, perspectives and experiences that make up Canada. By addressing employment barriers, we will see an influx of new talent, creativity, and innovation that persons with diverse abilities bring to their current and prospective positions.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Employee recruitment and development:

- i. Natural Resources Canada led a summer 2023 student recruitment initiative that focused on the recruitment of persons with diverse abilities.
- ii. Communication templates to candidates in a selection process were revised to be more inclusive and encourage the request for accommodation.
- iii. The Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Programs features improvements to accessibility throughout the recruitment process, including design, implementation, platform accessibility, and in- and post-process assessment.
- iv. The Natural Resources Canada Language School offers employees the opportunity to improve their skills in their second official language. Providing this service in-house allows for more tailored learning products and individualized accommodation possibilities.

2. Accommodation in hiring for the Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Program:

- i. Development of additional resources and information for hiring managers concerning accommodations is in progress. The program holds information sessions

for managers and provides resources to those supervising the Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Program recruits, including sessions on the topic of accessibility and accommodations.

- ii. Information is provided to candidates about how to request accommodations at all stages of the recruitment process, including the annual launch and acceptance of applications, through to the final phases.
- iii. Training and/or resources are provided to the volunteer assessment board to reduce unconscious biases and improve intercultural awareness.

3. Professional and personal connections:

- i. Accessibility and accommodation information is included in the Mental Health Toolkit for managers using clear and simple language.

4. Alignment

- i. Natural Resources Canada continues to promote government-wide initiatives related to persons with diverse abilities the department.
- ii. The Department has adapted the Public Service Commission tools to our needs, regarding the evaluation of bias and barriers in all appointment processes.

We continue to work towards recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that is representative of Canada's population while also supporting the government-wide goal for **recruitment of persons with diverse abilities** by 2025. We also aim to support and retain a diverse workforce by promoting talent management and career development of persons with diverse abilities.





The built environment

SUMMARY

Natural Resources Canada is firmly committed to improving the accessibility of its buildings. This initiative includes phases to broaden the understanding of accessibility, including non-structural aspects and invisible disabilities, to assess the accessibility of the entire building portfolio, to comply with new accessibility standards and to maintain an accessible working environment wherever possible.

Natural Resources Canada's work environment is not restricted to the physical buildings and the features themselves. Our employees who have invisible disabilities remind us that accessibility includes non-structural considerations such as noise, lighting and the use of scented products and that they extend to off-site work locations. Consequently, Natural Resources Canada will use the term "the work environment," even though the strategy and the *Accessible Canada Act* commonly use "the built environment."

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Accessibility awareness and preparations:

- i. In workplace accessibility, non-structural factors, like noise, lighting, and scented products, play a significant role. This understanding serves as the foundation for policies currently under development.
- ii. Managers and employees are strongly encouraged to take part in the new "Scents in the Workplace" training, which is self-paced and is available on the intranet.
- iii. Employees are informed about planned renovations and changes in the workplace, with efforts made to provide notice exceeding two weeks when possible. Information is disseminated through open communication channels,

promoting collaboration among teams and functional communities. Furthermore, scheduled modifications, including renovations, technological upgrades, and structural improvements, are typically arranged between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. to minimize disruptions.

- iv. Guidelines are in place for Natural Resources Canada's service providers and its partners for the use of environmentally friendly products in the modification and maintenance of workplaces. The aim is to maintain a sustainable, healthier working environment for employees by embracing responsible practices, particularly in the choice of products with zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- v. Communication and request management systems are scheduled for implementation in Natural Resources Canada's buildings. An example of such a system is the Assyst platform, which was successfully implemented in September 2023. Assyst supports communication between customers and the organization, ensures ticket processing, rigorous follow-up, and request inventory creation. It maintains records of updates, resolutions, and feedback, and also allows for the creation of a request log to drive continuous improvements.
- vi. This year, the department initiated the Inclusive Science and Accessible Labs pilot project with the following objectives: to bridge the hiring gap for individuals with diverse abilities, evaluate and address accessibility needs in current laboratories and facilities, retrofit these spaces for accessibility, foster a culture of inclusivity in lab environments, and showcase and advocate for the project's achievements throughout the department.





vii. In February 2023, the Inclusive Science and Accessible Labs Working Group organized a virtual conference with a guest speaker on innovative designs for accessible laboratories.

2. Security and emergency procedures:

- i. The Working Alone directive is in progress. This directive outlines the safety-centred procedures for when employees are at a worksite alone. This will provide persons with diverse abilities with the reassurance that procedures are in place and the autonomy to make their own decisions when concerns arise. There are ongoing discussions between the Security & Emergency Management Division and the AccessAbility Network to share best practices and collaborate on generating awareness about individual emergency plans for persons requiring assistance during a building evacuation.
- ii. Consultations with persons with diverse abilities is in progress to revise the emergency evacuation plans.

3. Compliance and enhancement:

- i. Natural Resources Canada is currently assessing the accessibility of its work environment, including public spaces and work areas, in collaboration with persons with diverse abilities, including employees, clients, and regular users. This evaluation aims to determine how Natural Resources Canada can become more accessible and inclusive while adhering to new accessibility standards. A checklist is being developed to assess the feasibility of necessary adaptations, associated costs, and establish a prioritized action plan.

- ii. New accessible design: Natural Resources Canada is collaborating with Public Services and Procurement Canada to implement a new design for the physical workspaces based on developed accessibility criteria.

4. Ongoing commitment:

- i. Ultimately, Natural Resources Canada is committed to maintaining an accessible working environment wherever possible, wherever it provides services, whether virtually, in person, or in the field. This commitment to accessibility is permanent and continuous.

The initiative to improve accessibility in Natural Resources Canada's buildings is structured with well-defined phases and an inclusive vision of accessibility. It aims to make Natural Resources Canada's buildings as compliant as possible with accessibility standards while continuously improving their accessibility. We are pursuing a comprehensive vision of accessibility that considers the needs of everyone, whether they are apparent or invisible and our commitment remains a central element of our long-term mission.





Information and Communication Technologies

SUMMARY

Accessibility in information and communication technologies has benefits for everyone; however, it is vital for many persons with diverse abilities. In a digital age in which every one of us relies on technology in one way or another to complete their work, inaccessible information and communication technology is a significant barrier to inclusion and productivity for persons with diverse abilities.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Streamline the procurement of information and communication technologies:

- i. The Accommodation Centre of Expertise and the Technology Accessibility Center have been updating internal processes to ensure the seamless integration of information and communication technologies. This includes their successful integration with New Employee Onboarding and IT Procurement processes, as well as ongoing optimization of the Natural Resources Canada Accommodation Process for employees in need of support regarding their computer and workstation environment. Despite increases in demand for these services, we have been able to maintain a service standard of providing a comprehensive assessment report within two business days.

2. Map the Information and Communication Technologies accommodation process for both managers and employees:

- i. Broad communication through our internal intranet around our new Accommodation Centre of Expertise is complete. This year has seen significant increases in request for services, signaling a pointed increase in local awareness.

- ii. Training sessions were delivered in the fall of 2023 to provide coaching and tools to develop managers' communication skills, to prevent conflict, and to assist them in navigating accommodation conversations. A mechanism for tracking all accommodation requests has been implemented. Natural Resources Canada executives have been empowered to support workplace accommodation measures by including accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equity objectives in their 2022-2023 performance management agreements.
- iii. As mentioned in the Accommodations section, the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport has been adopted by Natural Resources Canada and streamlines the accommodations process. Accessibility services were incorporated into our service management platform to track and monitor services requests and encourages employees and managers to use the self-service system to submit Technology Accessibility Center service requests which increases overall efficiency to track and monitor the Technology Accessibility Center services.

3. Assess the accessibility of internal platforms and applications:

- i. Work is ongoing around understanding how we can integrate accessibility objectives into application development processes.

4. Improve metrics related to Information and Communication Technologies accessibility issues:

- i. Requests for technology accessibility are being tracked through our service management ticketing software (note that these do not necessarily represent overall information and communication technology accessibility issues).





5. Increase support for Information and Communication Technologies users:

- i. Work is ongoing around enabling and promoting M365 accessibility features and other accessible tools. M365 is a cloud-powered productivity platform which includes programs commonly used by the department such as Microsoft Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and OneDrive.

6. Support employees in using accessibility tools:

- i. Additional personnel are being actively recruited to guarantee the prompt delivery of accessibility services for our internal users.
- ii. The Technology Accessibility Center continues to support users of adaptive non-standard technology (hardware and software) and overall assistance with computer environments for employees with specific requirements. An additional position was created to the Technology Accessibility Center to provide additional support.

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

SUMMARY

Accessible communication is an example of how accessibility is a universal concept. Every person in the department will benefit from concise and easy-to-understand communications. Clear communications both addresses **barriers** encountered by persons with visible and invisible disabilities and increases our effectiveness and productivity.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. **Increase understanding:**

- i. The Office for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility, the Communications, Portfolio Sector, and the Natural Resources Canada AccessAbility Network co-chairs collaborate to advocate values of inclusiveness at the workplace and provide guidance on training needed for managers in that domain.

2. **Centralize information on the intranet:**

- i. Web pages on accessible programs and services were created, consolidated, and updated to centralize the information.

We continue to work towards pursuing the equality of access to information for employees and to support business owners and employees in increasing compliance with processes.





The design and delivery of programs and services

SUMMARY

At Natural Resources Canada, our vision is to embed inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility into the culture of the department. We believe that through collective leadership and engagement, we have the chance to design and deliver internal programs that better meet the needs of our workforce. We also believe that Natural Resources Canada's unique external programs and services should be inclusive by design, providing equal, barrier-free access to all Canadians interacting with our department.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Supporting documents and resources:

- i. Elements from the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Analysis toolkit are being incorporated on the Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Program website information on accessibility and accommodations through the hiring process.

2. Facilitate data literacy:

- i. Natural Resources Canada continues to collaborate with other government departments to explore best practices for inclusive self-identification process and is an active participant in the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat initiative to centralize self-identification. This will allow for portability of self identification for employees.
- ii. The principles of accessible documents and presentations have been embedded in the designs of the Employment Equity Dashboards

- iii. New information on how to read and interpret data is now available for employees to use as they explore the multiple updated demographic charts on the intranet.

We continue to work towards delivering workplace and external programs and practices that are accessible and inclusive by design—fostering a healthy, safe, fair work and service delivery environment.

The procurement of goods, services and facilities

SUMMARY

Procurement is a key area in the fulfillment of our commitments in multiple areas related to accessibility. Natural Resources Canada recognizes that, although factors such as market availability limit us, there are opportunities for improvement internally.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Increasing understanding:

- i. Waiting for Canada School of Public Service to provide formalized/standardized training. In the meantime, the Accessibility Hub can be accessed for guidance and support as needed with respect to the use of a procurement vehicle to secure products and services.

2. Awareness of impacts:

- i. Work is underway to increase communication between buyers and clients by referencing appropriate resources and tools such as an Natural Resources Canada Accessibility page and links to the Accessibility Hub as primary reference point.





3. Statements of work:

- i. Business Owners have been provided with tools and information on drafting strong statements of work through a template which has been updated to include content on accessibility.

We continue to work towards facilitating and streamlining procurement of accessible products and services, while challenging, supporting and educating business owners in their responsibility for accessible procurement.

Transportation

SUMMARY

Because so many of our employees work in remote regions to conduct their research, it is important for Natural Resources Canada to consider transportation. It is also important for us to consider how we may use transportation as a means of achieving our commitments in other areas such as employment and culture shift.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Fieldwork assessments:

- i. Managers are expected to identify and accommodate accessibility requirements for their vehicle operators. The Authority to Drive form was updated to state: “All Canadians have the right to take part fully in society.” Employees are invited to speak with their manager if they have questions. Managers may seek advice from Departmental Materiel Management Unit on employee accessibility at work.

2. Fleet vehicle operating:

- i. As of 2023, the Fleet Guide, available on the intranet clarifies that it is under the Responsibility Centre Manager, the owner of the Natural Resources Canada vehicles, to ensure that vehicles are properly equipped to meet legal, policy, and accessibility requirements. We continue to work towards maintaining a fleet of vehicles that are widely accessible for field research.





Lessons learned

For future reporting cycles, putting more consistent measures in place for re-enforcing accountability on the feedback received is important. We will aim to have more follow-through with the feedback received with office of primary interest. Consistent tracking on measures taken should be included in future progress reports.

In addition, it would be a best practice to share the implementation plan more widely to allow those in the department to have an idea of the specifics of how the plan will be implemented. Next year, when collecting the information in the implementation plan, we will ensure that it is written in plain and accessible language to allow for wide-spread circulation. More consideration should be given to having a “plain language review” done on the documents associated with this portfolio in the future.

It would also be a best practice to report on the specific progress made to the individual or groups who have provided the feedback, recognizing that employees may be taking a personal risk in coming forward with their input.

Another area of improvement would be to host feedback sessions with the network more frequently. The value of hosting these meetings more often would be that we would get more time-sensitive feedback.

The feedback which is provided outside of the official departmental mechanisms, such as verbal feedback provided in meetings or externally sourced feedback, should have a documentation process so that it can also be represented in the feedback statistics for next year.

Moreover, as the three-year plan continues to unfold, it would be wise to revisit, and adjust or amend the commitments made in the original Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan annually. This would allow us to better reflect the progress achieved by the organization and would show any problem areas which have emerged since the inception of the plan.

Conclusion

The Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan is but a starting point in creating a workplace in which persons with diverse abilities are increasingly respected and considered and where they can flourish further. This first ever annual progress report showcases the progress that Natural Resources Canada has achieved over a short period of time and how, by working together, a difference can be made. With that said, we also recognize that there is still much work to do and maintaining momentum is key to continued success and growth in the space of accessibility and accommodation.

We recognize that true accessibility and inclusion require action and commitment on an individual level, and we look forward to creating a department that is accessible by default, celebrating and valuing the contributions of persons with diverse abilities in the work we do for Canadians.





General

We invite members of the public who interact with our department and our employees to provide feedback on accessibility barriers. This includes feedback on either the:

- way we are implementing the 2022–2025 Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan; or,
- barriers encountered by our employees or people who interact with Natural Resources Canada.

We can also provide the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan in alternate formats, including print, large print, Braille, audio and electronic. Use the following contact information to request an alternate format. We will respond to these requests within the time-lines outlined by the *Accessible Canada Act*.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- For telephone feedback: 1-855-525-9293 (toll-free in Canada) or 343-292-6096
- For electronic feedback: email ee-diversity-diversite-ee@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca, or use the online electronic form. If you are submitting feedback using the **electronic form**, select the “Other/Departmental” option from the drop-down menu.

NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA EMPLOYEES

- For telephone feedback: 1-866-943-4141 (toll-free) or 613-943-4141
- For electronic feedback: email ee-diversity-diversite-ee@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca, or use the online **electronic form**. If you are submitting feedback using the electronic form, select the “Other/Departmental” option from the drop-down menu.

FEEDBACK BY MAIL

Natural Resources Canada

Human Resources Branch; Employment Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Team
580 Booth Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0E4

We invite Natural Resources Canada employees to use internal mail delivery, as described in their Internal Mail procedures.

Members of the media may use the standard Natural Resources Canada **contact information for Media Relations**.

FEEDBACK PROCESSES

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all identified feedback within three to five business days.

We will send this acknowledgement by the same means used to send the feedback.

Note that all feedback will be considered equally. Both anonymous and identified feedback will be included in progress reports and in regular updates for internal discussion. However, we will not respond directly to anonymous feedback.

For more information on how feedback will be used, consult the **Monitoring and Reporting section of the Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan**.

DESIGNATED PERSON

Karine McNeely

Manager, Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Employment Equity Team
Human Resources Branch, Corporate Management Services Sector





Glossary

ableism: discrimination or social prejudice against persons with diverse abilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. It can manifest as an attitude, stereotype or offensive comments or behaviour.

ACE: Accommodation Centre of Expertise—an internal Natural Resources Canada service to managers and employees of that serves as a one-stop-shop for all accommodation questions

ASL: American Sign Language

barrier: anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of people with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. This includes anything physical, environmental, architectural, technological or attitudinal that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice.

business owner: a person who is responsible for the Natural Resources Canada business or program area for which the project, procurement or program is established. The business owner is responsible for:

- Defining the required capabilities, intended business outcomes and benefits of a project, procurement or program at its outset,
- Achieving the business outcomes and benefits following implementation.

CART: Communication Access Real-time Translation – a speech-to-text interpretation service.

contracting agent: a person who has delegated contracting authority to enter into a contract or contractual arrangement on behalf of a department or agency.

disability: any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.

duty to accommodate: Duty to accommodate is the obligation to take steps to eliminate disadvantages to employees and prospective employees. The duty applies to disadvantages that result from a directive, rule, practice or physical barrier that has or may have an adverse impact on certain individuals or groups. The relevant individuals or groups are those protected under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and identified as a designated group under the *Employment Equity Act*.

Future of Work: Future of Work planning is a departmental priority that considers how the workforce is undergoing transformative changes that are different from our past and present.

GC Accessibility passport: A voluntary tool that facilitates accommodation by placing the employee at the centre of the accommodation process and promotes dialogue and collaboration between employees and managers. It is a flagship initiative under the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada.

HRB: Human Resources Branch—a branch of the Corporate Management Services Sector that is formally responsible for responding to the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act* on behalf of the department.

LSQ: Langue des signes québécoise

NAAC: Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Advisory Council—through co-development and collaboration, the NAAC recommends strategies to improve accessibility across the department. The NAAC supports the Human Resources branch in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2022–2025 Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan.





NAAP: 2022–2025 Natural Resources Canada Accessibility Action Plan

NRCan: Natural Resources Canada

O-IDEA: Office for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility—Its primary objective is to bring together representatives from all sectors and employee networks to work collaboratively on projects and programs and to identify areas.

PSES: Public Service Employee Survey—an anonymous government-wide annual survey that assesses various areas of work life.

TAC: Technology Accessibility Centre—an internal Natural Resources Canada resource centre which helps to reduce or eliminate the barriers presented by standard computer environments through expertise in specialized computer technology and accommodations and ergonomic coaching.