



# Accessibility Plan

2022–25

Accessibility Plan

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as represented by the Minister responsible for the  
Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario  
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## Message from the President



Nancy Gardiner, President  
Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario

It is with great pride that I present the Accessibility Plan for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario). When I was appointed as President of this Agency in September 2021, it was clear that I was entering a department that is open, accommodating and willing to adapt so that everyone can do their best work. Further, FedDev Ontario's Public Service Employee Survey results in 2020 clearly demonstrated our commitment to inclusion and accessibility: 100 percent of employees who requested and were granted workplace accommodation in the previous two years were satisfied with the measures taken.

Through the work of our Senior Delegated Official for Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Accessibility Champion, our staff has had the opportunity to engage with colleagues with disabilities and hear about their experiences through open, honest and safe dialogues.

FedDev Ontario remains committed to achieving greater accessibility for employees and clients. I invite you to read about our commitments in this Plan and I encourage you to watch for our annual progress reports against these commitments. I am confident that our dedication to each other and the clients we serve in southern Ontario will drive our efforts in achieving our accessibility goals.

## General

The Accessibility Plan (the Plan) for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario or the Agency) aligns with the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#).

To submit feedback on the Plan, to request a copy of the Plan or the feedback mechanism in alternate formats, or to comments on barriers within FedDev Ontario, please use the [Provide feedback button](#) or connect with our executive Champion for Accessibility, Carole Bourget:

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## Background

The *Accessible Canada Act* received royal assent in July 2019 and aims to achieve a Canada without barriers by January 1, 2040. This will be achieved by identifying, removing and preventing barriers from emerging in the following areas:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies
- communication (other than information and communication technologies)
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

As the Public Service of Canada is the nation's largest employer, the [Office of Public Service Accessibility](#) (OPSA) was established to prepare the public service to meet or exceed the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act*. Canada's public service can set an example of what it means to be accessible and can demonstrate that the inclusion of individual differences, abilities and disabilities will make the public service stronger.

OPSA's creation of the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) established the vision of being the most accessible public service in the world. In order to realize this vision, OPSA identified five key goals based on the areas identified in the *Accessible Canada Act*:

1. Improve recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities
2. Enhance the accessibility of the built environment
3. Make information and communications technology usable by all
4. Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services
5. Build an accessibility-confident public service

## Accessibility statement for FedDev Ontario

FedDev Ontario's Accessibility Plan is based on the guiding principles in the *Accessible Canada Act* and the goals established in OPSA's *Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada*. FedDev Ontario is committed to creating a working environment where:

- everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of disability or ability,
- everyone has barrier-free access to full and equal participation in the work and activities of FedDev Ontario, regardless of disability or ability, and
- everyone has the opportunity to be involved in the development and design of FedDev Ontario's activities, with the objective of reaching the highest level of accessible involvement for all persons.

Accessibility is under the umbrella of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at FedDev Ontario, and is grounded in respect and the acknowledgement that our differences make us stronger. The drivers of accessibility at FedDev Ontario include:

- our intention to make FedDev Ontario the best it can be for employees and clients alike, regardless of disability or ability
- the [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#)
- Canada's support to the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

FedDev Ontario has established an Accessibility Committee that includes employees with disabilities who are able to speak directly to issues of accessibility and identify barriers. The work of this Committee is done in collaboration with Agency champions, management teams, staff and external groups to align the Accessibility Plan with the Agency's priorities.

The following sections are intended to provide a summary of FedDev Ontario's priorities as guided by the *Accessible Canada Act* and the *Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada*: employment, built environment, information and communication technologies (ICT), communication (other than ICT), the procurement of goods, services and facilities, the design and delivery of programs and transportation.

## Employment

FedDev Ontario is committed to recruiting, developing and retaining high-performing, talented, engaged employees with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, including those with visible and invisible disabilities. The commitment to accessibility in employment stretches from using clear, plain language when developing a job description, to communicating to job seekers and current employees that their accessibility needs can be addressed and their confidentiality respected. FedDev Ontario recognizes that the stigmas surrounding disabilities and required accommodations must be addressed to create a safe, respectful and accessible workplace and work culture for all employees.

### Identified barrier:

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in employment were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in the area of employment:

- Hiring managers and human resources advisors will continue to use clear, plain language for job descriptions, job postings, assessment material and other communication to job seekers and employees and will continue to welcome accommodation requests.
- Use of the Public Service Commission's [Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities](#) will be promoted to hiring managers as a way to connect with potential candidates with disabilities.
- Awareness about the requirements and opportunities of the [Directive on the Duty to Accommodate](#) will be generated through presentations to FedDev Ontario's Managers' Forum.
- Use of the [Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) will continue to be promoted.
- Employees with disabilities will have access to targeted career development support and leadership opportunities.
- Mandatory training on accessibility, barriers and inclusion will be implemented for managers, supervisors and human resources professionals.
- The Corporate Accommodations, Security and Procurement team will make use of available resources to action accessibility requests and ensure timely delivery of accommodation measures.
- Forums like town halls and fireside chats will continue to be used to raise awareness of accessibility concerns and will work to reduce the stigma that surrounds issues of accessibility.
- Surveys and feedback will be used to measure progress and continue to improve the experience of persons with disabilities.

#### **FedDev Ontario's goals:**

- Job seekers and employees with disabilities see FedDev Ontario as an employer of choice.
- Job seekers and employees with disabilities have access to employment opportunities at FedDev Ontario and can contribute at their full potential.
- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) targets of seven percent for recruitment and six percent for promotion of persons with disabilities in the public service are supported.

## **The built environment**

FedDev Ontario does not own the buildings in which its offices are located. The Agency will work closely with building management, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and Shared Services Canada (SSC) to identify and address any existing physical barriers in all locations.

#### **Identified barriers:**

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in the built environment were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in all of the Agency's physical office locations:

- Employees with visible and invisible disabilities will be engaged in identifying and addressing gaps in accessibility of the built environment and workplace culture.
- With input from PSPC and SSC, accessibility audits will be conducted in Agency office locations and building management will be engaged to address physical barriers.

- Centralized funding will be made available with a view to providing seamless, timely and effective accommodation solutions.

**FedDev Ontario's goals:**

- All office locations are accessible and barrier-free.
- Staff are equipped with the tools they need to do their work.

## Information and communication technologies (ICT)

The work that is done at FedDev Ontario relies on information and communication technologies. These technologies must be accessible to all employees, regardless of ability or disability.

**Identified barriers:**

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in information and communications technologies were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in ICT:

- In collaboration with employees and with other departments, current systems, software, websites and equipment will be evaluated for accessibility and best practices will be implemented.
- The [Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) will continue to be implemented and its use as a communication tool will be encouraged between employees and managers to help employees succeed in the workplace.
- Awareness of resources to assist managers and employees in finding accessible solutions, such as the [Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology](#) (AAACT) team, will be increased through presentations, employee on-boarding sessions and internal employee newsletter articles.

**FedDev Ontario's goals:**

- All new systems, software, websites and equipment are accessible by all employees.
- Employees with accessibility needs have access to adaptive technologies to do their work effectively.

## Communication (other than ICT)

Accessible communication benefits all audiences by making information clear, direct and easy to understand. It involves respecting differences and removing barriers so that everyone can use information and services, participate in consultations and conversations, and attend and contribute to events.

**Identified barriers:**

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in communications were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in communications:

- FedDev Ontario will continue efforts to meet all accessibility standards for internal and external web content.
- An “inclusive and accessible first” approach will be adopted for web, intranet, social media and other digital content.
- The use of “Inclusive Content” resources on FedDev Ontario’s intranet will be promoted so that digital communications, documents and Agency events are created to be accessible to all employees.
- Use of the [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#) will be promoted to support the creation of accessible content.

**FedDev Ontario’s goals:**

- Accessibility is a primary consideration when developing documents, presentations and events.
- Employees and managers have an increased level of confidence in how accessibility is approached and achieved.

## The procurement of goods, services and facilities

FedDev Ontario complies with the [Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments](#) and the [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#) which state that, as of 2019, all departments and agencies must include accessibility criteria when specifying requirements for goods, services and facilities.

**Identified barriers:**

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in the procurement of goods, services and facilities were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in procurement:

- Support and resources will be provided to the procurement team, including [PSPC’s guidance on accessible procurement](#), as they continue to meet Treasury Board requirements.
- Managers and employees will be educated on the elements of accessible procurement through training opportunities, internal staff newsletter articles and awareness-raising content during National AccessAbility Week.

**FedDev Ontario’s goals:**

- Procurement strategies will continue to apply the principles of universal design when considering the purchase of goods and services, including:
  - the design is useful to people with diverse abilities
  - the design is flexible to accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
  - the purchased good or service is easy to use, regardless of experience, knowledge, language or concentration level
  - the design minimizes hazards to the user

- the purchased good or service can be used efficiently, comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue

## The design and delivery of programs and services

As a federal agency within the Government of Canada, FedDev Ontario aims to be representative of the people it serves. FedDev Ontario acknowledges its role and responsibility to:

- create and implement inclusive and accessible policies and programs
- offer alternative formats through which Canadians can access program and service information
- make decisions that best serve the region of southern Ontario

### Identified barriers:

Based on consultations at the time this Plan was developed, no barriers in the design and delivery of programs and services were identified. However, FedDev Ontario proactively committed to pursuing the following actions to support accessibility in program design and delivery:

- Continue efforts to meet or exceed TBS' [Standard on Web Accessibility](#) on all internal and external web pages.
- Promising accessibility practices demonstrated by [other federal departments](#) will be considered in the creation of accessible content.
- Alternate formats for program information, applications and other documents will be prepared and readily available when requested by a client.
- Clients experienced in diversity, cultural sensitivity and design thinking will be consulted on their experiences with FedDev Ontario programs and services, and improvements will be made where needed.

### FedDev Ontario's goals:

- Policy development is done with a lens of accessibility to present information and services to the widest range of clients.
- Program information and tools are available in multiple formats to best serve clients.
- The process of applying for and participating in FedDev Ontario's programs and services is free from systemic, cultural, attitudinal or physical barriers.

## Transportation

After a careful review of the Agency's policies, programs and services, and after consultations with FedDev Ontario employees, no barriers in relation to transportation were identified. However, should the situation arise where transportation barriers are apparent, FedDev Ontario will follow best practices to eliminate these barriers.

## Consultations

The consultation process for FedDev Ontario's Accessibility Plan included virtual meetings with small and large groups, fireside chats, targeted group discussions and digital surveys. The Plan includes input and feedback from the following groups.

**FedDev Ontario's Accessibility Committee**, comprised of employees with disabilities who are able to speak directly to issues of accessibility and identify barriers within the Agency.

**Young Professionals Network**, an inclusive network of younger employees within the Agency who bring their perspective to issues of accessibility.

**FedDev Ontario's Managers' Forum**, a supportive and positive network through which managers develop technical and soft skills, share best practices and collaborate on areas of common interest from a management perspective.

**FedDev Ontario's Executive Committee**, a group of senior leaders with the wisdom and experience of years of leadership and involvement in the public service at many levels.

**Office of Public Service Accessibility**, a leading organization within the Government of Canada offering resources, best practices and advice on accessibility issues.

**Human Resources Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Centre of Expertise**, a team of knowledgeable Human Resources staff with experience in the areas of Duty to Accommodate and other avenues for accessibility and inclusion.

**FedDev Ontario staff** are engaged annually with an "Accessibility Check-In survey." This voluntary, anonymous platform gives employees a safe place to share concerns and highlight areas where the Agency's Accessibility committee can have the greatest impact.

## Conclusion

The Government of Canada's [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) describes how the public service can identify, remove and prevent physical, systemic and cultural obstacles so that every person, including those with disabilities, can flourish. A better Canada can be built by including the knowledge and expertise of persons with disabilities in all aspects of our work.

The goal from the outset has been simple but monumental: to make Canada's public service the most inclusive public service in the world. FedDev Ontario's Accessibility Plan, feedback tools and progress reports have been shaped to support this goal and to comply with the [Accessible Canada Act](#).

Moving forward, our efforts will be focused on establishing stronger linkages between the Agency's Accessibility Plan, its strategic planning documents and its framework for diversity, equity and inclusion so that these important commitments can better leverage each other. For example, the Agency's Accessibility Committee, comprised of staff from various branches and employees who have self-identified as persons with disabilities, has been established and will be part of the umbrella of employee networks promoting inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

When we make sure that everyone can participate and contribute, without barriers, we make Canada better for all.

## Glossary

**Accommodation** (Adjustment) – any change in the working environment that allows a person with a disability or functional limitation to do their job. Changes can include:

- adjustments to the physical workspace
- adaptations to the equipment or tools
- flexible work hours or job-sharing
- relocation of the workspace within the greater workplace
- reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks for others
- time off for medical appointments

Accommodations (adjustments) can be temporary, periodic or long-term, depending on the employee's situation or changes in the workplace.

**Barrier** – anything that hinders or prevents the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairments, or a functional limitation (obstacle). Barriers include anything physical, architectural, technological or **attitudinal**. \* Barriers can also be based on information, communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice.

\***Attitudinal barriers** (attitudes) are behaviours, perceptions and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, to judge, or have misconceptions about persons with disability.

**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.

**Discrimination** – treating someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction. Whether the discrimination is intentional or not, it imposes disadvantages not imposed on others or withholds or limits access that is given to others. Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, there are 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination:

- race
- national or ethnic origin
- colour
- religion
- age
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity or expression
- marital status
- family status
- genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test or disclose the results of a genetic test)
- disability

- conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered

**Inclusion** – the act of including someone or something as part of a group. An inclusive workplace is fair, equitable, supportive, welcoming and respectful. Inclusion recognizes, values and leverages differences in identities, abilities, backgrounds, cultures, skills, experiences and perspectives that support and reinforce Canada’s evolving human rights framework. (Source: [\*Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion\*](#))