



Town of Amherst  
Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee  
Agenda

Date: **Wednesday, September 17, 2025**  
Time: **4:30 pm**  
Location: **Board Room, Town Hall**

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		Pages
<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b>	
	<b>1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement</b>	
	"I would like to acknowledge that our gathering today is taking place in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional, unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaw people. I would also like to acknowledge that Nova Scotia has another unique people, the people of African descent whose legacy and contributions date back over 400 years predating confederation of this land. We are all treaty people."	
	<b>1.2 Approval of Agenda</b>	
	<b>1.3 Acceptance of Minutes - May 28, 2025</b>	2 - 4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Discussion Items</b>	
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<b>3.</b>	<b>Next Meeting Date</b>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Adjournment</b>	

**TOWN OF AMHERST**  
**Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee**  
**Minutes**

**Date:** May 28, 2025  
**Time:** 4:30 pm  
**Location:** Council Chambers, Town Hall

**Members Present** Councillor Kathy Wells, Chair  
Deputy Mayor Hal Davidson, Vice Chair  
Jim Prendergast, Citizen Representative  
LJ Barquilla, Citizen Representative  
Tammy Gero, Citizen Representative  
Vanessa Jones, Citizen Representative  
Victoria Vance, Citizen Representative

**Members Regrets** Clifford Pinchbeck, Citizen Representative

**Members Absent** Marina Godfrey, Citizen Representative

**Staff Present** Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager  
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk  
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

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**1. Call to Order**

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

**1.1 Introductions**

The Clerk introduced the Town of Amherst staff, members of Council and the members of the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee that were in attendance.

**1.2 Territorial Acknowledgement**

The Clerk gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

**1.3 Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

The Clerk asked for nominations for the position of Chair. Deputy Mayor Davidson nominated Councillor Wells for Chair. There being no further nominations, Councillor Wells accepted the Chair position. The Clerk then asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. Victoria Vance nominated Deputy Mayor Davidson. There being no further nominations, Deputy Mayor Davidson accepted the Vice Chair position.

**1.4 Approval of Agenda**

**Moved By Victoria Vance**

**Seconded By LJ Barquilla**

**That the agenda of the May 28, 2025 Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee meeting be approved as circulated.**

**Motion Carried**

## 2. Discussion Items

### 2.1 Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee (AIDE) Strategic Plan

Mallory Klooster discussed the Strategic Plan and asked the Committee for any feedback and suggestions.

LJ Barquilla said that there is a need for genderless washrooms in town-owned buildings and facilities, and encouraged businesses to do the same.

Vanessa Jones asked if any staff has received the Rick Hansen training (RHFA Professional Training). Natalie LeBlanc answered that there was a staff member who received it but he is no longer with the Town. Vanessa suggested maybe another staff or committee member could take the training.

Vanessa Jones discussed the scooter safety training that will be held at the stadium on June 11, 2025 at 10:00 AM., and asked if there will be any community engagement at this event to receive feedback on accessibility issues in the town that needs corrections/adjustments to aide with their mobility. She further suggested that the wording for "senior" scooter safety should be changed as not everyone who uses a scooter is a senior, and that perhaps the term used should be powered mobility instead of scooter.

Deputy Mayor Davidson asked what training should staff receive. He would like some feedback to Council as to what training staff need and when targets will be met as to when they will receive that training. LJ Barquilla asked if committee members can attend these training sessions as well. Councillor Wells suggested that staff look into this however there could be costs to that. LJ suggested perhaps local businesses could be invited to attend as well to cut costs.

Deputy Mayor Davidson suggested that the Strategic Plan should be shared with all of Town staff.

Jim Prendergast asked if the Province has a list of suggested/required courses since this committee is mandated by the Province. Vanessa Jones said that the Rick Hansen Training is on the list of suggested courses.

### 2.2 Territorial Acknowledgement

Mallory Klooster advised that during the Council's Strategic Priorities Workshop, one of Council's 'points to capture' was to obtain a legal opinion about the current wording of the Town's Territorial Acknowledgement.

Deputy Mayor Davidson stated that he feels it is not necessary to obtain a legal opinion on the word "unceded" as most other municipalities use the same word in their Territorial Acknowledgements. Deputy Mayor Davidson thought that the term Indigenous Blacks could be updated to 'people of African decent'.

**Moved By Deputy Mayor Davidson**

**Seconded By Tammy Gero**

**That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend that Council amend the Territorial Acknowledgement Policy to update the Territorial Acknowledgement to remove the words Indigenous Blacks and replace it with People of African Decent.**

**Motion Withdrawn**

**Moved By Deputy Mayor Davidson**

**Seconded By LJ Barquilla**

**That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity Committee recommend that Council amend the Territorial Acknowledgement Policy to update the Territorial Acknowledgement to read:**

**“I would like to acknowledge that our gathering today is taking place in (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional, unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi’kmaw people. I would also like to acknowledge that Nova Scotia has another unique people, the people of African decent whose legacy and contributions date back over 400 years predating confederation of this land. We are all treaty people.”**

**Motion Carried**

**2.3 Legion Request to Name Green Space**

Mallory Klooster reported that the Amherst Legion has submitted a request to name the green space beside Town Hall to reflect a Mi’kmaw saying for 'Healing Place'.

**Moved By Victoria Vance**

**Seconded By Tammy Gero**

**That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend Council direct staff to consult with local indigenous communities to investigate an appropriate word or phrase in Mi’kma’ki for Healing Place.**

**Motion Carried**

**3. Next Meeting Date**

Mallory Klooster indicated that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind is looking for volunteers. If any committee member would like to volunteer, or knows someone who would, please contact Mallory.

The next meeting was scheduled for September 17, 2025 at 4:30 PM.

**4. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

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Natalie LeBlanc  
Municipal Clerk

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Councillor Kathy Wells  
Chair

# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee  
**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being  
**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
**RE:** **Events for September 13-22**

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The following events are a wonderful opportunity to strengthen community bonds, raise awareness of important cultural issues, and celebrate Amherst's diversity.

**1. Transit Study in Person Public Session Wednesday, September 17 - 6:30-8:30PM**

The Town of Amherst has initiated a Transit System Feasibility Study with WSP Canada Inc. (WSP) has been retained to assist the Town with undertaking this work.

Currently in the Community Engagement phase, the Town and WSP will be conducting town staff and external stakeholder interviews, online surveys and an in person public session.

Members of this Committee are encouraged to complete the online surveys which can be found on the Town of Amherst website ([Amherst.ca/transit.html](http://Amherst.ca/transit.html)) as well as attend the In Person Public Session between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on September 17th at the Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre - 5 Ratchford Street.

**2. Welcoming Week September 13<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>/ Welcoming Party September 20<sup>th</sup> from 3-6PM**

Welcoming Week is a time to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and community spirit. It highlights the importance of fostering a welcoming environment for newcomers to our town, including immigrants, refugees, and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Events are happening throughout Cumberland over the course of the week.

Committee members, staff and residence are encouraged to join us on Saturday September 20<sup>th</sup> from 3-6PM at the Amherst Curling Club for this year Welcoming Party hosted by YReach and the Amherst Multicultural Association.

We look forward to working together to create an inclusive, vibrant, and connected community.

# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee  
**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being  
**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
**RE:** **Fall Events**

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The upcoming events are a wonderful opportunity to strengthen community bonds, raise awareness of important cultural issues, and celebrate Amherst's diversity.

## 1. Truth and Reconciliation Events

**Purpose:** September 30, 2025, is Truth and Reconciliation Day which aims to honor the indigenous communities of Canada, raise awareness about the history of residential schools, and promote healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

This year Town Staff partnered with Indigenous Affairs to highlight our Indigenous Community in Amherst and has the following events scheduled for **Monday, September 29, 2025.**

**9:30 AM** Flag Raising and Proclamation at 92 Church St (YMCA Flag Pole)

**10:00 AM** Flag Raising at 40 Havelock St (Indigenous Affairs)

**10:15 AM** Unveiling of new sidewalk crossing located at the intersection of Havelock St and King St.

## 2. "Busy Amherst" October Events

**Purpose:** October is shaping up to be a vibrant month in Amherst with a series of exciting events aimed at engaging and entertaining residents. This will include Esther Fest, Fibre Arts, Amherst in Gloom and the Scarecrow Stroll, Walking Tours along with other arts and culture celebrations, and family-friendly activities, like the U17 game taking place on October 31<sup>st</sup>!

Members of this committee, town staff and interested community members are invited to join us and we look forward to working together with our community partners to create an inclusive, vibrant, and connected community.

**Attached:** Busy Amherst- October Calendar



# Amherst

NOVA SCOTIA

## 2025 OCTOBER EVENTS

### Fibre Arts

The Nova Scotia Fibre Arts Festival runs from Oct 13-18. Visit: <https://www.facebook.com/FibreArtsFestival/>

### Esther Fest

Oct 17-30, 2025  
Visit: [greatamherstmystery.com](http://greatamherstmystery.com) for full schedule of events.

### Scarecrow Stroll & Amherst in Gloom

Oct 17-30, 2025  
Visit [amherst.ca](http://amherst.ca) to download your scarecrow map!



### Oct 2

Women's Outreach and Community Engagement Alliance  
CCUBIC 10 am-3:30 p.m.



### Oct 4

Mosonic Breakfast  
20 Lawrence St.  
Call (902) 667-5895

### Oct 7

Square Dancing  
Cumberland Twirlers  
Spring St Academy  
7 pm

### Oct 10 or 14

Door Open Amherst Event

### Oct 16

Fibre Arts House Tours  
4-8 pm  
9 Rupert, 113 Spring, 188 East Victoria

### Oct 16

NDEAM  
Amherst lights up blue and purple for Disability Employment Awareness

### Oct 17

The Spirit of Scatarie Book Tour  
21 Acadia St. 6pm

### Oct 17

Harvest Meal

### Oct 18

Great Amherst Street Party  
Victoria Square  
11 am to 3 pm

### Oct 18

Nova Scotia Mass Choir

### Oct 18

Mix & Mingle

### Oct 19

AAHT Walking Tour  
Starts at Dayle's  
1-4 pm

### Oct 23

AAHT Walking Tour  
Starts at Dayles 5-8 pm

### Oct 24

Symphony Nova Scotia  
Music at Trinity  
1 Ratchford St 7:30 pm

### Oct 31

U17 Canada Red vs Czechia  
Amherst Stadium  
185 Church St. 7:30 pm



# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee  
**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being  
**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
**RE:** **Emergency Preparedness**

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Emergencies can happen suddenly and with little warning. While they can affect everyone, they often have a greater impact on persons with disabilities and older adults. During an emergency, accessible communication and transportation may not be available, service animals or guide dogs may become hurt or frightened, and power outages may affect essential medical devices.

The Accessibility Directorate has shared several emergency preparedness resources, including general information and tips such as what to include in an at home emergency kit and go-bag, tips on creating a support network and guidance on how to support others in your community.

These resources are available for committee members and the community.

Staff will share these resources with other Town Hall employees, the Amherst Police Department, the Amherst Fire Department and Town of Amherst Public Works.

**Attached:**

[Are you Ready? Emergency Preparedness Guide for Persons with Disabilities and Older Adults in Nova Scotia:](#)

[Emergency and Disaster Preparedness](#)

[Be Ready: Emergency Preparedness and Recovery](#)

[Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities](#)

**Webinars:**

[Virtual Gathering Recording - Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities and Older Adults](#)

[Prepared Together](#)

# Are You Ready?

**Emergency Preparedness Guide  
for Persons with Disabilities  
and Older Adults in Nova Scotia**



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## RESOURCES

**\*\*If your life or safety is in immediate danger, call 911\*\***

### **211**

Information about supportive organizations and services in your community

### **411**

For help finding community, or business phone numbers

### **511**

Updates on provincial road conditions

### **711**

Message Relay Service for persons with a hearing or speech disability

### **811**

To talk to a registered nurse (24 hours a day, seven days a week) about non-urgent health issues, including advice on when you should go to the emergency room

### **Disaster Animal Response Team of Nova Scotia**

Works with Canadian Red Cross to set up and run emergency shelters for animals affected by a disaster or an emergency  
information@dartns.org

### **Emergency Management Office (EMO) Nova Scotia**

[beta.novascotia.ca/government/emergency-management-office](http://beta.novascotia.ca/government/emergency-management-office)  
1-866-424-5620 (business hours only)

### **Environment Canada**

[weather.gc.ca/](http://weather.gc.ca/)  
Weather Alerts: [weather.gc.ca/warnings/index\\_e.html](http://weather.gc.ca/warnings/index_e.html)  
Weather Line: 1-902-426-9090

### **Nova Scotia Health Community Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service**

Contact a clinician Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Voicemail only on evenings, weekends, and holidays  
1-855-922-1122 (toll free)

## **Nova Scotia Health Mental Health Crisis Line**

For those in a mental health crisis or anyone concerned about them  
1-888-429-8167 (toll free, 24-hour)

## **Nova Scotia Power**

nspower.ca

### **Critical Customer Communication Program**

1-800-428-6230 (toll free)  
902-428-6230 (HRM)

### **Customer Service**

1-800-428-6230 (toll free)  
1-800-565-6051 (TTY) (toll free)

### **Report a power outage**

1-877-428-6004 (toll free)

## **Nova Scotia SPCA**

1-902-835-4798  
1-844-835-4798 (toll free)  
info@sPCA.ns.ca

## **RCMP**

1-866-297-7554 (TTY, toll free, 24-hour)

## **VON Vial of Life Program**

902-454-5755  
[getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/yprprdnssgd-eng.pdf](http://getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/yprprdnssgd-eng.pdf)

## **The Weather Network**

theweathernetwork.ca



## GLOSSARY

In this section you will find explanations for key words and phrases used in this guide. You will also find definitions for words you may need to know before, during, or after a disaster or an emergency.

### **Adaptive equipment**

Equipment that helps a person with any task associated with daily living, such as

- mobility aids, such as wheelchairs
- grooming aids, such as zipper pullers
- eating aids, such as easy-grip spoons

### **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

Ways that a person can add to, or augment, their speech, or share ideas and feelings without talking, such as

- unaided systems, such as gestures, body language, facial expressions, and some sign vocabulary
- basic aided systems, such as pointing to letters, words, or pictures on a board
- high-tech aided systems, such as touching letters or pictures on a computer or tablet that then say words out loud

### **Comfort centre**

A facility opened during a disaster or an emergency event for people who plan to stay in their homes or other safe locations but who need temporary access to services such as power, heat, or water. Comfort centres are not set up to accept evacuees or offer overnight shelter. Support may include

- light refreshments
- hot or cold drinks
- information

### **Disaster**

In emergency management, a disaster happens when all emergency resources are overwhelmed in a particular event. For example, the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016 and Hurricane Juan in Nova Scotia in 2003 were disasters.

## **Emergency**

Any event that is causing or could cause

- many casualties
- widespread damage to property
- major interference in normal activities
- loss of confidence in government

and needs immediate attention and action.

In Nova Scotia, responses to emergencies begin at the municipal government level. The Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office provides provincially coordinated support when more than one municipality or the entire province is affected. It also provides support when asked by one or more emergency management partner.

- This guide covers emergencies that require a coordinated and focused response, such as wildfires or hurricanes.
- This guide does not cover emergencies with a limited impact, such as minor car crashes or housefires.

## **Emergency plan**

A list of needs and the resources to meet those needs in an environment affected by an emergency.

## **Emergency or evacuation shelter**

A facility opened during a disaster or an emergency event for people who must leave their homes or community and have no other safe alternative. These shelters provide a place to sleep overnight. They are also set up to meet other essential needs for evacuees.

## **Evacuate**

To leave, or be removed from, an unsafe building or place, such as a neighbourhood or community, and to go, or be moved to, a safer place.

## **Evacuee**

A person who leaves, or is removed, from an unsafe building or place and goes to, or is moved to, a safer place.

## **Personal care assistant**

A person who helps another person meet their daily personal needs, such as bathing, dressing, grooming, cooking, or eating.

## **Personal support network**

A group of people who can help someone at their home, school, workplace, or any other place where they spend a lot of time. The people in this support network should

- be trusted by the person who needs help
- be able to check if that person needs help before, during, or after an emergency
- know that person's capabilities and needs
- be able to offer help within minutes

## **Power-dependent equipment**

Assistive technology and medical devices that need electricity to run, such as

- respirators and ventilators
- power wheelchairs and scooters
- oxygen, suction, or home dialysis equipment
- TTY phones, and smartphones or tablets for video relay service, and visual or text communications
- CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machines

## **Service animal**

An animal that has been trained to help persons with disabilities with their daily living tasks. Service animals are allowed by law to be anywhere their handlers go, including comfort centres and emergency or evacuation shelters, unlike emotional support animals, therapy animals, or pets.

## **Weather alerts**

Environment and Climate Change Canada sends out four types of weather alerts.

- 1. Weather advisory:** This tells you a certain weather or environmental hazard, such as high humidity or poor air quality, is either happening, about to happen, or is expected to happen.
- 2. Special weather statement:** Statements are issued when a weather hazard is not severe enough to require a weather watch or warning. There may also be uncertainty around whether the hazard will happen, or where or when it will
- 3. Weather watch:** This tells you that potentially threatening weather may happen where you are. No immediate action is required.
- 4. Weather warning:** This tells you severe weather is happening now, is going to happen, or has been seen on weather radar. You should act immediately to protect yourself.



## INTRODUCTION

*Are You Ready?* is an emergency preparedness guide created for persons with disabilities and older adults living in Nova Scotia. This guide can help you to be ready in case a disaster or an emergency happens here.

Nova Scotia is usually a safe place to be. But there have been emergencies here before, including

- hurricanes and tropical storms
- severe snowstorms and blizzards
- floods
- forest fires and wildfires
- disease outbreaks and public health emergencies
- industrial accidents

They can happen here again with little warning.


In emergencies, phone, electrical, gas, or water services may be disrupted. Roads and bridges may be blocked. Stores and gas stations may be closed. Essential services may stop. It may be weeks or more before things are back to normal.

Emergencies can affect everyone. They often have a bigger effect on persons with disabilities and older adults. Accessible communication and transportation may not be available. Service animals or guide dogs may become hurt or frightened. Power outages may affect medical devices. People in your support network may not be able to help you right away.

Most emergency preparedness plans say you should be ready to meet your needs on your own for at least three days after the event. They also say you should create an at-home emergency kit and pack a small emergency go-bag to take if you must leave your home. As a person with a disability or as an older adult, you may need to think of extra steps for your plan. You may need extra items for your emergency kit and go-bag.

Part of being prepared for emergencies is deciding ahead of time what you can do for yourself and what help you may need before, during, and after an event. Planning now can help you to be prepared and stay calm when an emergency happens. Planning now can also help you to clearly communicate to others what is best for you during an emergency.

This guide was created to help you start to make your own preparedness plan. If this task feels too big or overwhelming at times, remember that even a basic



plan is better than no plan. Read the advice in the guide. Then think about your personal needs. Plan for what you need to stay safe and to be ready.

Some of the information in this edition of *Are You Ready?* has been gathered from similar disaster and emergency preparedness resources, particularly those created with persons with disabilities and older adults in mind. Local, provincial, and national disability organizations, persons with disabilities, emergency responder organizations, and other stakeholders also helped to develop this guide. We thank everyone for their input.

*Please note:* This guide does not cover every kind of emergency that could happen in Nova Scotia. The tips here are not intended as medical or legal advice. Throughout this guide, we have used person-first language (for example, person with a disability) as it reflects the language used in the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017. We recognize that there are diverse language preferences across disability communities and by individuals.



## BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

It is important to be prepared for emergencies before they happen. When you are prepared, it is easier to meet your needs during an emergency, and to recover after.

Think about what kinds of emergencies are likely to happen in Nova Scotia. What might your community look like during and after? How will you meet your needs if everyday life is disrupted? As a person with a disability or as an older adult, how will you plan to have your specific needs met during and after? How will you advocate for yourself or ask for support and accommodations when help and resources may be limited?

### General Tips

- Create a personal ability plan. Think about what you will be able to do on your own and what help you will need. If you need help, ask a friend, family member, or someone from your support network to make this plan with you and write it down.
- Plan ahead for the best ways for you to get emergency messages and instructions. These can include
  - local television and radio announcements
  - first responder and government social media accounts and websites
  - emergency alert apps for mobile phones
  - your support network
- Make sure you or someone in your household knows how and when to turn off the controls to your home's water, electricity, gas, and sewer. Keep any tools you will need near the controls.
- Take a tour of your home or workspace. Check hallways, stairwells, doorways, windows, and other areas for problems that could keep you from safely leaving a building. If possible, move furniture and other items that block escape routes.
- Prepare an emergency kit for your home. (See Appendix 1.)
- Prepare an emergency go-bag that you can take with you if you have to leave your home in a hurry. Store it somewhere easy to find, such as in a closet by the main door. (See Appendix 2.)

- If you use any power-dependent equipment or augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) devices, pack extra batteries, chargers, or power cords.
- Create an emergency contact list so others will know whom to call if you are unable to communicate for yourself. Make at least two copies. Keep one in your emergency go-bag and another in your everyday wallet or purse. (See Appendix 3.)
- Create a support network of people, starting with your emergency contacts, who could help you in emergencies. This might include trusted family members, friends, neighbours, roommates, personal care assistants, or co-workers. (See Appendix 3.)
- Reach out to those people in your neighbourhood who have strengths, skills, and resources that can help reduce the impact of an emergency. Find out who knows first aid or who has access to a generator, for example.
- Consider giving those in your support network an extra set of keys to your home and teaching them how to use any assistive equipment.
- Create a backup plan for how you will get groceries and other essential items if the people in your support network are unable to reach you.
- If you take any medications, make a list of them with the names and phone numbers of your doctors, your medications and doses, and your medical conditions. Note any allergies. Keep copies in your emergency kit, emergency go-bag, and wallet or purse.
- If your medication needs to be kept in the refrigerator, have a back-up plan to keep it cool, such as using a portable cooler with ice packs.
- If you use power-dependent equipment that is needed to sustain life or avoid serious medical complications, contact Nova Scotia Power to register with their Critical Customer Care Program. (See Resources.)
- Plan backup locations to stay in case you need to leave your home or community. These might include a friend or family member's home, or at a hotel or motel outside of your area.
- Know the best ways for you to receive local evacuation orders and how to confirm if nearby comfort centres and emergency or evacuation shelters are open and accessible.
- Contact your municipal emergency management coordinator to discuss your specific needs during an emergency or evacuation. They may be able to arrange check-ins or other help before and during emergencies.

- Practise how to explain to people the best way to guide you, move your equipment, or otherwise help you safely and quickly. Be ready to give brief, clear, and specific information in ways that work best for you.

## **Disability-specific Tips**

### **Deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind**

- Keep extra batteries in your emergency kit and go-bag for devices that help you communicate. If possible, have access to a mobile smartphone charger and make sure it is fully charged.
- Check that your local emergency system can interact with TTY or internet-based relay services.
- If you use hearing aids, keep them in a place you can easily find them in an emergency.
- Set up different kinds of alarms (flashing or vibrating) in your home or workspace to help you notice if an emergency is happening.
- Prepare cards that you can present to first responders or other helpers during or after a disaster. These might say things such as
  - “I need announcements written or signed.”
  - “I use American Sign Language and need an ASL interpreter.”
- Check which broadcasting systems, websites, or social media livestreams use closed captioning or interpreters.
- Make sure you are registered with Text 911.
- If needed, make sure you have a pen and paper.

### **Blind, low vision, and deaf-blind**

- If you use a white cane, keep extras at work, home, and anywhere you spend a lot of time. Keep a spare white cane in your emergency kit.
- If you have some vision, think about installing security lighting in each room to help you move around safely. Pack high-powered flashlights with wide beams in your emergency kit. Pack extra glasses or contact lenses.
- Keep the lights in your home in working order so emergency responders can find their way around.

- Some local TV stations may only broadcast warnings as a text scroll at the bottom of the screen. Pack a battery-operated radio in your emergency kit so you or someone in your household can hear updates and instructions.

### **Mobility disabilities**

- Let trusted people who live near you and/or your building manager know your mobility needs and what support you would need to leave your home or building in an emergency.
- Make sure you are listed in the evacuation procedures for the building as someone who needs help.
- If you use an elevator to get in and out of the building where you live or work, plan another way to get out of the building. If you use a mobility device, such as a wheelchair or walker, and can't use it on the stairs, learn how to tell people how to lift and carry you safely. Practise your backup escape plans. You may wish to find out if your building has an evacuation chair. If yes, find out where it is and learn how to use it.
- If you use a ramp to get out of your building, have a backup plan in case the ramp has been damaged or can't be used.
- Keep sturdy gloves in your emergency kit and go-bag. These can protect your hands if you have to wheel over hazards.
- If you use a wheelchair, keep a tire patch kit and a can of seal-in-air product handy. Make sure you know how to fix a tire or have instructions ready to share with someone.
- If you use a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation, have a backup plan in case you need to evacuate the area and these options are not available.

### **Communication disabilities**

- Put paper, pencils or pens, and a written statement that describes how you communicate in your emergency kit and go-bag. If you use an AAC device, make sure your written statement includes that detail.
- Prepare an emergency health information card that includes the best way for people to communicate with you.
- If you use a laptop or communication device to communicate, pack a portable USB charger that will let you charge it in a vehicle.


- Prepare laminated communication cards ahead of time that can help first responders or other helpers understand and support your needs in an emergency.
- Always have a laminated paper communication display with you. Include key vocabulary items (basic needs, pain, emotion, medication).

### **Intellectual and cognitive disabilities**

- If needed, ask for help to prepare your emergency kit and go-bag. This can take time to prepare. You may need to purchase items you don't already have. You may find it helpful to do a little bit at a time over a few weeks.
- Prepare, or have someone prepare for you, instructions that will help you focus and stay calm in an emergency.
- Practise what to do during and after an emergency. Practise leaving your home and other places where you spend time until you feel confident you will know what to do in an emergency.
- If you have a service animal, include them in the practice.
- Think about what first responders, such as firefighters or police officers, or other helpers may need to know about you. Practise saying it ahead of time or write it down and keep it with you. For example:
  - "I may have a hard time understanding what you are telling me."
  - "Please speak slowly and use simple words."
  - "I talk to people in a different way. I can point to pictures or key words, which you can find in my wallet or emergency kit."

### **Neurodivergent disabilities**

- Put comfort items and sensory protective equipment (headphones, sunglasses, hand fidgets, and other items) in your emergency kit and go-bag.
- Practise your plan ahead of time as often as you need until it feels familiar. Find out ahead of time what parts of your plan may present the biggest challenges or potential triggers. Adjust your plans so they work best for you.

- 
- Think about what a first responder or another helper may need to know about you in an emergency. Practise saying it ahead of time. You may want to prepare communication cards to laminate and keep with you. These might say something like
    - “I am autistic and may become overwhelmed in this environment. Please help me find a safe and quiet place as soon as possible.”
    - “My name is... With my consent, or in an emergency, please contact...”
    - “I am non-speaking. Please wait for me to type my responses on my communication device.”



## DURING AN EMERGENCY

It is important to stay informed during an emergency. You or someone in your household should

- follow updates from trusted news and weather sources
- pay attention to instructions from emergency responders, local emergency management officials in your municipality, and the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office
- be alert for orders to shelter in place or evacuate

When it is safe, check in with your support network. Let them know where you are or where you are going.

It is normal to feel scared or overwhelmed during a disaster or an emergency. Try to focus on the actions you can take and ask for help when you need it.

### General Tips

- If you are safe and have time, take steps to protect your home, or wherever you are staying, from threats like fire or floodwaters.
- Stay away from windows during storms. If floodwaters are rising, go to the highest level of your home.
- If the power is on, charge all battery-operated equipment and devices.
- If the power goes out or you are on the move, check your devices' battery levels once in a while. Ask for help with recharging as needed.
- Only shut off utilities, such as water, gas, and electricity, when authorities instruct you to do so.
- If the power goes out, use battery-operated flashlights and lanterns (candles are a fire hazard). Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep food cold as long as possible.
- Only use a generator outside in a well-ventilated area.
- If you lose power and decide to cook on a barbecue, only use it outside in a well-ventilated area away from any buildings or trees.
- Find your emergency kit and emergency go-bag as soon as possible. Let others sheltering with you know where they are.

- If you can safely stay in your home, stay in your home. It is best for everyone, including emergency responders, if people are not moving from place to place, leaving their personal comfort zones or overwhelming resources like the Red Cross. The key at this time is safety, not comfort.
- Evacuation and emergency shelters should only be used if you have no other safe option for evacuation. Do not go to a shelter unless local officials have announced it is open.
- If you must evacuate
  - check local road condition updates as some routes may have become impassable or dangerous
  - try to go to one of the locations you decided on in your planning phase, such as a friend or family member's home or a local hotel or motel
  - take your go-bag and any equipment you will need
- Advocate for yourself. Use the information you practised sharing in your planning phase to explain to others how to safely and quickly guide or move you and any equipment.
- Let first responders, shelter volunteers, or other helpers know right away if you need accommodations or support. For example, let them know if standing in a line for a long time is painful or difficult, or if a bright and noisy room is overwhelming.
- If you are evacuating or at a shelter and will need devices or equipment recharged, ask for help sooner rather than later.
- Know how to recognize signs of stress. Monitor your physical and emotional well-being. Make sure to take breaks to eat, drink, and rest when it is safe to do so.
- If you have animals in your care, including service animals, make sure they have access to food, water, and relief breaks when it is safe. Give them reassurance.
- Let your support network or emergency responders know about any injuries or pain you might have.

## Disability-specific Tips

### Deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind

- Make sure your support network knows to update you about announcements or evacuation orders that are not accessible for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Emergency shelters may be very noisy and could interfere with hearing. Try to find a quiet space when communicating with others.
- Have a written list of your emergency contacts and support network.
- Have a pen and paper and/or a small white board and marker.
- Show prepared cards to share your communication needs with first responders or others who are helping. These cards might say things like
  - "I need announcements written or signed."
  - "I use American Sign Language and need an ASL interpreter."

### Blind, low vision, and deaf-blind

- If someone is helping you to exit a building, ask them to
  - tell you about any obstacles
  - give you any instructions out loud
  - tell you when you have reached a safe place
  - describe your new surroundings to you
- Emergency shelters may be disorienting for people who are blind or have low vision. If you feel unsafe moving around a new location, ask someone to go with you.
- If you use a white cane and have to evacuate, use the cane as soon as it is safe to do so.

### Mobility disabilities

- Give yourself as much time as possible to evacuate or otherwise get to safe shelter. The usual routes, elevators, and ramps may be inaccessible.
- If you use a mobility device, keep your emergency go-bag as near to it as possible, ideally in a backpack that can be kept on the back of a wheelchair or worn on your back.
- Put on work gloves to protect your hands before wheeling over hazardous or unfamiliar terrain.

- If you must be lifted and carried out of a building, explain quickly and clearly to first responders or other helpers how to do so safely.
- If you are evacuating in a vehicle, ask first responders or other helpers to make sure your mobility device is safely stowed and not left behind.

### **Communication disabilities**

- Share prepared communication cards with first responders and other helpers if they are having trouble understanding your speech. These might say something like
  - “I have a communication disability. It is OK to ask me yes/no questions. I may want to respond with my communication device.”
  - “I have difficulty speaking because I have a disability. Please listen carefully when I talk.”
- If possible, make sure someone who understands how you communicate can stay with you during an emergency.
- If you have to leave, remember to take any AAC accessories, such as batteries, chargers, switches, and mounts.
- Let your support network know if first responders or other helpers, such as volunteers and staff at an evacuation centre, are having difficulty understanding you.

### **Intellectual and cognitive disabilities**

- Check in often with emergency broadcasts on local television and radio stations, or ask others with you to tune in, to see if you need to evacuate.
- Keep your emergency go-bag near you, as well as items like your keys and wallet or purse, in case you have to leave right away.
- Let others know if they are giving you instructions too quickly for you to understand. It is better to ask again than to not understand or miss important steps.
- If you are away from home when an emergency happens, look for first responders and other helpers. Ask them to help you find a safe place to shelter. Ask them to stay with you until help arrives or your emergency contacts can be reached.
- If you have a mobile phone, call the people in your support network right away. Tell them where you are and if you need help.

## Neurodivergent disabilities

- Share prepared communication cards with first responders and other helpers if you are having difficulty speaking or are non-speaking. These might say something like
  - “I am autistic and may become overwhelmed in this environment. Please help me find a safe and quiet place as soon as possible.”
  - “I am non-speaking. Please wait for me to type my responses on my communication device.”
- Use your comfort items and sensory protective equipment (headphones, sunglasses, hand fidgets, and other items). They can help you to stay focused and calm in uncertain situations and unfamiliar environments.



## AFTER AN EMERGENCY

An emergency can happen quickly. Sometimes the event only lasts a few hours or even minutes. The after-effects, however, can last a long time. Your home may be damaged. Your neighbourhood or community may be without essential services or utilities for a long time. People may have been hurt. Lives may have been lost.

Your independence may also be affected. Changes to your usual environment or routines may change your ability to complete tasks. You may need to ask for help with things you can usually do on your own.


After a disaster or an emergency, you may need to

- replace damaged items
- repair your home
- find new ways to get around or get essential items
- fill out forms and gather information for provincial disaster financial assistance programs or insurance companies

Getting back to normal after an emergency can be stressful. Reaching out to your personal support network can make your recovery easier and less stressful.

### General Tips

- If instructed by authorities, shut off any damaged utilities in your home.
- Be sure to reach out to your emergency contacts as soon as you can. Let them know where you are. Tell them if you need help accessing your home or getting groceries and other essential items.
- Be sure to let your municipal emergency management coordinator know if you cannot stay in your home because of damage. They can help with temporary shelter and other immediate needs you may have.
- Stay away from downed power lines and flooded roads.
- Check broadcasts on local television and radio stations, government websites, and other trusted sources for information about disaster financial assistance programs that may be offered. You can also ask your support network to help you get this information.
- You may have been injured or may experience new or worsening symptoms after a disaster or an emergency. Seek medical attention as soon as you are able.

- 
- You may also experience a lot of emotions once the immediate danger has passed. If you feel overwhelmed, seek mental health support as soon as you can.
  - Service animals may experience emotional trauma. Get them back to their usual routine as soon as possible.
  - After the disaster or emergency is over, review your preparedness plan. Ask your support network to help you with this review. Use what you have learned to help improve your plan for the next disaster or emergency.
  - The layout of your home or office may have changed after a disaster or an emergency. Review your exit routes and make changes if needed.
  - Replace any emergency kit or go-bag supplies you used during this disaster. Restock prescriptions and medical supplies.
  - Check to see if any of your devices or equipment need recharging, repairing, or replacing.



## APPENDIX 1: Emergency Kit Checklist

The items in this emergency kit checklist are a starting point. They may not be exactly what you need. Think about your needs and those of your household and prepare your kit according to them.

It's a good idea to check your emergency kit twice a year—spring and fall. Even non-perishable food items have best-before or expiry dates. Medication, batteries, or other supplies may need replacing.

### Basic Emergency Kit Supplies

- Water**
  - enough for at least three days
    - three litres for each person for each day for drinking
    - two litres for each person for each day for food preparation and sanitation
  - store in plastic containers, not glass
  
- Food and Kitchen Supplies**
  - at least three days' worth of food for each person
  - food that won't go bad
    - packaged food: instant oatmeal or soup mixes
    - canned food: baked beans, tuna, fruit
    - dried fruit, nuts, granola bars
    - crackers, cookies
  - manual can opener, scissors (if you are unable to use a manual can opener or scissors, include food that is packaged with pull tabs or other options that are accessible for you)
  - plastic plates, cups, utensils (fork, knife, spoon)
  
- First Aid Kit**
  - Basic first aid supplies such as
    - bandages
    - antiseptic or moistened towelettes
    - gauze pads and adhesive tape
    - thermometer
    - tweezers
    - medicine dropper
  - Non-prescription medications for
    - headache or pain (acetaminophen, ibuprofen)
    - upset stomach (antacid)
    - other common symptoms (throat lozenge, allergy pills)

**Personal Hygiene and Cleaning Supplies**

- bathroom and facial tissue
- wet wipes, soap, hand sanitizer
- hair grooming items
- toothbrush, toothpaste
- menstrual products
- disposable gloves, face masks
- plastic garbage bags
- disinfectant cleaning wipes

**Clothing**

- at least one complete change of clothes per person
  - suitable for the time of year and typical local weather
- raincoat or waterproof poncho
- hat, gloves
- sunglasses

**Service Animal Supplies**

Note that service animals, such as guide dogs, may go everywhere with their handler, including emergency shelters.

- food and water, feeding dishes
- leash, harness, vest
- identification tags, registration
- medications
- blanket, toy, or comfort item

**Emotional Support Animal, Therapy Animal, and Pet Supplies**

Note that although emotional support animals and therapy animals have a role in helping persons with disabilities, they are not allowed in emergency shelters. Pets are not allowed in emergency shelters either. Your emergency plan should include backup sheltering plans for these companion animals.

- food and water, feeding dishes
- leash and harness
- identification tags
- medications
- blanket, toy, or comfort item

- Additional Supplies**
  - flashlight, extra batteries
  - pocketknife
  - work gloves
  - battery-operated or crank radio
  - paper, pencil
  - whistle
  - reading material, games
  - baby supplies
    - diapers, wipes
    - baby food, spoons
    - extra clothing, blanket
    - bottles, formula

### **Disability-specific Emergency Kit Supplies**

It's important to plan ahead for any disability-specific equipment, medication, devices, or supplies you may need.

Check off the supplies you use on the list below. You may want to add notes to describe the items and where they can be found in your home. Add extra items that you need.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> diabetes supplies (lancets, blood sugar meter, insulin syringes, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> crutches  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dialysis equipment   | <input type="checkbox"/> walking cane  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prescription medications   | <input type="checkbox"/> white cane  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sensory comfort items (headphones, fidget items)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> MedicAlert identification   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AAC devices and chargers   | <input type="checkbox"/> information cards (for example, ones that state "I am Deaf and use ASL" or "I have a communication disability. Please speak slowly when you talk.") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> assistive devices and chargers or batteries                            | <input type="checkbox"/> pen and paper   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> extension cord   | <input type="checkbox"/> smartphone chargers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prescription glasses, contact lenses, and supplies                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing devices  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dentures   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dressing devices   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> suction equipment  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> oxygen equipment   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> incontinence supplies  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> urinary supplies   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ostomy supplies  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> monitors   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wheelchair, tire repair kit  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> walker   |  |



## APPENDIX 2: Emergency Go-bag Checklist

You may have to leave in a hurry. Prepare a smaller version of your emergency kit in a small bag, such as a backpack.

The items in this go-bag checklist are a starting point. They may not be exactly what you need. Think about your needs and those of your household and prepare your go-bag according to them.

It's a good idea to check your emergency go-bag twice a year—spring and fall. Even non-perishable food items have best-before or expiry dates. Medication, batteries, or other supplies may need replacing.

### Basic Supplies

- food that won't spoil, is ready to eat, easy to open, and easy to carry
- small plastic bottles of water
- extra phone charger and battery bank
- battery-powered or hand-crank flashlight
- battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- extra batteries for flashlight and radio
- small first aid kit
- basic medications for pain or other minor discomforts
- basic toiletries (toothbrush, wipes, sanitizer, menstrual products)
- disposable gloves and masks
- pen and notepad
- whistle
- extra clothing for the season and local weather
- emergency blanket
- pocketknife
- work gloves
- paperback book, puzzle book, cards to pass the time
- utensils (fork, knife, spoon)

## Disability-specific Emergency Go-bag Supplies

In addition to the items suggested for a basic emergency go-bag, it's important to plan ahead for extra equipment, medications, devices, or other accommodations you may need.

Check off the supplies on the list below that you use. Add extra items that you need.

- diabetes supplies (lancets, blood sugar meter, insulin syringes, etc.)
- dialysis equipment
- work gloves
- wheelchair tire-repair kit
- prescription medications
- sensory comfort items (headphones, fidget items)
- AAC devices and chargers
- assistive devices and chargers or batteries
- extension cord
- prescription glasses, contact lenses, and supplies
- hearing devices
- dentures
- incontinence supplies
- urinary supplies
- ostomy supplies
- emergency medication (your pharmacist may be able to provide additional doses specifically for an emergency kit or emergency go-bag)



## **APPENDIX 3: Emergency Contacts: Building Your SUPPORT NETWORK**

Ask at least three people you trust to be your emergency contacts. They should be willing and able to check on you before, during, and after a disaster or an emergency, especially if you need life-sustaining equipment or regular care. They should also know how you communicate and what assistive devices you may use.

Your emergency contacts should be the people you would want first responders or other helpers to contact before, during, and after a disaster or an emergency if you are unable to communicate for yourself or need additional support.

Try to include someone who lives very near and can respond quickly. For example, a trusted neighbour or member of your faith community can help you get groceries and other essentials.

Try to also include someone who does not live in your immediate area as they are unlikely to be affected by the disaster or emergency.

Choose several ways to communicate with each other in case one method is not available.

People you may want as emergency contacts include

- family members
- friends
- personal care assistant
- neighbours
- roommates
- co-workers
- members of your faith community

You may also want to reach out to your local emergency management coordinator to discuss your specific needs during an emergency or evacuation. Many municipalities now maintain a list of persons with disabilities and their needs.

**Emergency contact #1**

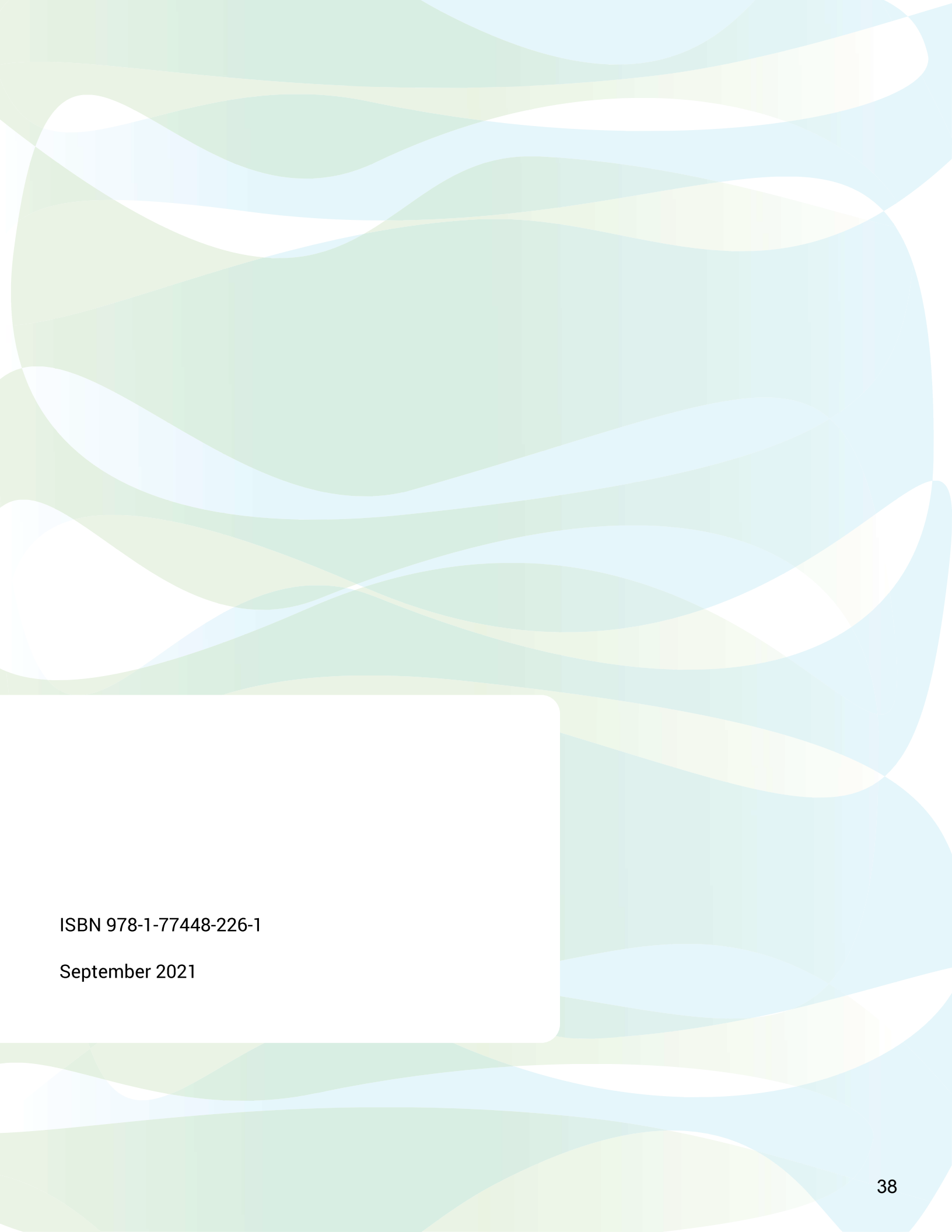
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency contact #2**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency contact #3**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_



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# Safety Tips

## Power Outages



### Be prepared:

- Have enough water, food, medications, pet supplies to last at least 72-hours
- Charge cell phones and other devices. Consider purchasing a power bank to charge devices
- Have a battery-powered or wind-up radio
- Check the supplies in your emergency kit including batteries, glow sticks and flashlights
- Consider adding an alternative heat source

### During a power outage:

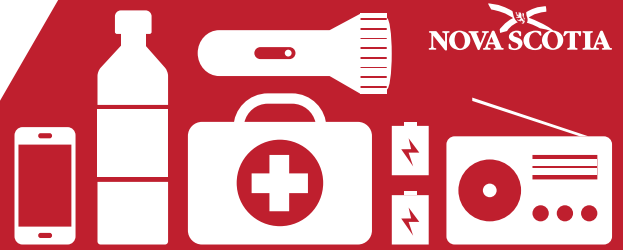
- Turn off appliances and leave one light on
- Use battery-powered lights or glow sticks and avoid candles
- Never use BBQs, generators or camp stoves indoors
- Avoid opening your fridge or freezer unless its necessary
- Monitor local media for updates

### After a power outage

- Wait 10-15 minutes before turning on tools and appliances
- Disconnect power before entering a flooded basement
- Throw out unsafe food
- Reset clocks, timers and alarms
- Restock your emergency kit

# Safety Tips

## Preparing an Emergency Kit



When there's an emergency like a bad winter storm, a hurricane, or a fire it's important to be prepared. You need to be able to look after yourself and your family for the first 72 hours. Having an emergency kit prepared will help get you through the situation.

### Things to remember when preparing an emergency kit:

- the kit should be easy to carry
- everyone in the household should know where it is
- check your kit twice a year and replace anything that is out of date
- replace the food and water once a year

### Things to include:

- your emergency plan
- at least 6 litres of water per person (2 litres per day)
- food that won't spoil and that you can eat without cooking, like canned and dry foods
- manual can opener
- first-aid supplies
- at least a 3-day supply of your prescription medicines
- wind-up or battery-powered flashlight
- wind-up or battery-powered radio
- batteries for your flashlight and radio
- money in small bills
- copies of important papers like your driver's license, birth certificate, and insurance papers

It is also important to always keep your car's gas tank as full as possible and your cell phone fully charged.

# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee  
**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being  
**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
**RE:** **AIDE Fall Training Manual Review and Next Steps**

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During the May AIDE meeting, Town staff received input from the members of this committee regarding the following goals and action items:

## **Priority Area: Education**

**Goal 2:** Provide training opportunities for accessibility, equity and anti-racism.

Since the last meeting the Accessibility Advisory Board established a committee of members with expertise in service delivery to develop recommendations for an accessibility standard in the delivery and receipt of goods and services. The list of recommendations included Service Delivery Trainings for staff, volunteers, leaders or other providers who deliver services to the public.

The Director of Human Resources with the Town of Amherst has also reviewed the AIDE Training Manual and has provided several considerations as we move forward in aligning training initiatives with our broader People Strategy.

Key Considerations from the Director of HR include:

1. Role and Department Specific Training
2. Integration with Training and Development Program (2026 Budget)
3. Foundations of Belonging Training

It was concluded that combining the AIDE Training Manual with tailored delivery and the Foundations of Belonging initiative and embedding both with our upcoming Training and Development Program would take the steps necessary to create a more inclusive, engaged and resilient workplace culture.

Taking this feedback into consideration as well as the recommendations from the Goods and Services Committee, staff have developed the attached fall training plan for review.

**Attached:** Town of Amherst AIDE Fall Training Manual  
Full Recommendations English  
Summary of Recommendations English  
Memorandum from Director of Human Resources

# Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (AIDE) Fall Training Manual

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## Purpose

To structure and guide learning and development activities that help town staff, Amherst Police and Fire Departments, individuals and groups acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to foster accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity within Amherst.

## Internal Plans

The Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (AIDE) Plan outlines our vision and goals over the next three to five years and guides our work to bring equity, accessibility and anti-racism to the forefront of the Town's decision-making process to strengthen the health and wellbeing of Amherst.

AIDE Strategic Plan include the following directives for training:

### Under Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

1. Be the leader in the community known for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
  - Ensure compliance with the NS Human Rights Act.
  - Provide educational opportunities for elected officials and employees on respect, cultural awareness and the promotion and protection of human rights.

### Under Accessibility Plan

1. Goods and Services
  - Improve service delivery by educating staff through ongoing awareness and training programs.
  - Increase knowledge and understanding of accessibility, equity, human rights, disability rights and accessibility barriers in our community.

- Explore new awareness and training opportunities for staff, senior management and Council.

## 2. Education

- Provide training opportunities for accessibility, equity and anti-racism.

### Internal Considerations from Human Resources

The Director of Human Resources with the Town of Amherst has provided the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee with the following considerations to align our training initiatives with the Town’s broader People Strategy:

1. Role and Department-Specific Training
  - Training delivery should be targeted by role and/or department to ensure practicality, maximize impact, and avoid a “check-the-box” learning experience. Tailored training will better connect the AIDE principles to the real challenges faced in specific work contexts.
2. Integration with Training & Development Program (2026 Budget)
  - HR is in the process of developing a comprehensive Training and Development Program for inclusion in the 2026 operating budget for all staff.
  - Many of the suggested AIDE trainings will be assessed and incorporated into this program in order to advance the goals outlined in the AIDE Strategic Plan.
3. Foundations of Belonging Training

HR has signed an access agreement to provide the *Foundations of Belonging Training* for all Town Hall staff and managers (approximately 60 initial participants). Roll-out of the training is anticipated in October.

### Provincial Priorities

The Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Plan underscores the importance of both internal and external educational training to strengthen the Town of Amherst and foster a more equitable and inclusive community. This priority was also emphasized during the plan’s development in collaboration with AMANS and the provincial Office of Equity & Anti-Racism.

Recently, the Accessibility Directorate’s Goods & Services Advisory Committee submitted recommendations to the Minister of Justice, including a call for regular staff training, along with additional customized training where needed.

The Government of Nova Scotia has shown its commitment to equity and accessibility through key legislation and initiatives such as the Accessibility Act, the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act, and its 2025–26 Training Plan.

In addition, staff must be prepared to support individuals with disabilities as they transition from institutional settings into the broader community, as required by the Human Rights Remedy. Training will be essential to ensure staff are equipped to assist, accommodate, adapt to, and communicate effectively with all members of the public.

## **Goals & Objectives**

- Improve municipal, individual and organizational performance.
- Increase community-wide awareness and confidence when engaging with persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen inclusive practices across municipal staff, businesses, non-profits, and community organizations.
- Support compliance with provincial accessibility legislation leading up to 2030.

## **Target Audience**

- All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works
- Local Businesses
- Small Organizations
- Non-Profits
- Interested Community Members

## Training Modules

### Accessibility Trainings

#### AI for Accessibility and Social Impact

**Timeline:** September 25, 2025 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Purpose:** Equip participants with practical skills and strategies to leverage AI tools for accessibility and social good.

**Format:** Online (Registration required)

**Resource:** <https://seachangeolab.com/ace-trainings/>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

#### Accessible Customer Service

**Timeline:** November 27, 2025 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Purpose:** Build skills in interacting with customers who have a variety of disabilities, including service animals, assistive devices, and neurodivergence.

**Format:** Online (Registration required)

**Resource:** <https://seachangeolab.com/ace-trainings/>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff: Front Desk and Administrative Supports, Community Living Department, Businesses, Non-Profits, Small Organizations

#### Engaging Persons with Disabilities

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** Build confidence in how to meet, work with, and communicate with people with disabilities in respectful and effective ways.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced

**Resource:** <https://accessible.novascotia.ca/resources/engaging-persons-with-disabilities>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff: Front Desk and Administrative Supports, Community Living Department, Businesses, Non-Profits, Small Organizations, Community Members

## Disability Rights Online

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** Learn the rights of persons with disabilities under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and how to seek redress for violations.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced (11 modules)

**Resource:** <https://disabilityrightsonline.ca/online-training/>

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

## Accessible Province by 2030

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** Understand compliance requirements for accessibility in Nova Scotia by 2030.

**Format:** Online video (30 minutes)

**Resource:** [https://vimeo.com/530108865/e5d6c9c23c?&signup=true#\\_=\\_](https://vimeo.com/530108865/e5d6c9c23c?&signup=true#_=_)

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

## Serving all Customers

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** The aim of the course is to help businesses create inclusive and welcoming environments for all customers. Serving All Customers Better is a free online course designed to help frontline service staff address and prevent consumer racial profiling.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced

**Resource:** <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/education-training/free-online-training/serving-all-customers-better>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff: Front Desk and Administrative Supports, Community Living Department, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits.

## Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Trainings

### Allyship Foundations on Demand

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** There are four modules in this course which examine your own intersectionality and privilege, explore historic and current day realities of equity seeking groups and proactively support inclusion and belonging in your workplace.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced

**Resource:** <https://training.seachangeolab.com/courses/allyship-foundations-on-demand-4461c813-e436-4581-9e7a-24e446c9c628/salespage>

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

### Foundations of Belonging-External

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** This 11-module course offers a Nova Scotia-specific introduction to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility (DEIBA), with a focus on fostering a culture of belonging in the workplace. Designed for all employees in NS, this course is available in both English and French, totaling 8 hours of content.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced

**Resource:** <https://www.aisc.ca/foundations-of-belonging/>

**Audience:** Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

### Foundations of Belonging-Internal

HR has signed an access agreement to provide the *Foundations of Belonging Training* for all Town Hall staff and managers (approximately 60 initial participants). Roll-out of the training is anticipated in October. This comprehensive 11-module program (delivered by Placemaking 4G in partnership with Skills OnlineNS) addresses core areas of diversity, inclusion, and belonging, including:

- **Disrupting Bias:** understanding how biases form and how to disrupt them in practice.
- **Privileged Aggressions:** exploring the impact of “micro” aggressions and strategies to repair harm.
- **Stereotyping:** causes, consequences, and ways to interrupt stereotyping.

- **Privilege & Power:** examining privilege, racism, and applying an anti-racist lens in the workplace.
- **Creating Accessible Workplaces:** addressing barriers and strategies for inclusion.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** communicating effectively and respectfully across differences.
- **Allyship in Practice:** defining and demonstrating meaningful allyship.
- **Becoming a Leader in Diversity & Belonging:** building inclusive leadership skills.
- **Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work:** fostering psychologically safe and inclusive teams.
- **Influencing Organizational Change:** using tools and strategies to shift systems and lead change.

After the first round of training is delivered, consideration will be given to broadening the program to include other staff, with the intention of sharing the benefits of accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equity across the organization.

### **Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia**

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** Pathways to Actions under Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia, offers tools and resources to create more inclusive, equitable workplaces.

**Format:** Online, Self-paced

**Resource:** <https://pathwaytoactions.ca/resources/>

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

### **Black Canadians: History, Presence and Anti-Racist Futures**

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** This micro-course explores some of the major histories, migrations, artists and activists that have contributed to the presence and survival of Black people in Canada.

**Format:** Online, self-paced

**Resource:** <https://www.coursera.org/learn/black-canadians?isNewUser=true>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff: Community Living Department, interested staff, Amherst Police Department, Businesses, Non-Profits, Small Organizations, Community Members

### **Indigenous Awareness 101**

**Timeline:** Flexible, self-paced

**Purpose:** Learn more about the issues facing Indigenous peoples today from historical and critical perspectives.

**Format:** Online, self-paced

**Resource:** <https://ecoacademy.ca/online-learning/indigenous-awareness-101/>

**Audience:** Town Hall Staff: Community Living Department, interested staff, Amherst Police Department, Businesses, Non-Profits, Small Organizations, Community Members

### **Anti Racism Training Module**

**Timeline:** Flexible, Self-Paced

**Purpose:** The training module is designed to offer foundational learnings around anti-racism, including:

- Understanding systemic and institutional racism
- Understanding the impacts of colonialism
- Exploring personal bias
- Learning practical tools for interrupting racism in daily interactions and organizational structures
- Engaging in reflection and dialogue to support ongoing learning

**Format:** Online, Self Paced. Also available as interactive sessions (in person or virtually)

**Resource:** <https://www.recreationns.ns.ca/resources-and-training.html>

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members

### **The Antiracism Course with Selam Debs**

**Timeline:** Review resources for more information

**Purpose:** The aim of this course is to dismantle unconscious bias, address white privilege, uncover systemic racism and learn how to center the experience of BIR (Black, Indigenous and racialized) individuals.

**Format:** Online. Register to join the waitlist.

**Resource:** <https://www.salamdebs.com/antiracism-course/>  
<https://www.salamdebs.com/freeworkshop>

**Audience:** All municipal staff: Town Hall Employees, Amherst Police and Fire Departments and Public Works, Businesses, Small Organizations, Non-Profits, Community Members.

## Implementation Approach

- All Municipal Staff: Complete all modules, with priority on compliance (Accessible Province by 2030) and customer service.
- Businesses & Small Organizations: Focus on Accessible Customer Service, Engaging Persons with Disabilities, and compliance requirements.
- Non-Profits: Complete all modules, with emphasis on Engaging Persons with Disabilities and Disability Rights.
- Community Members: Encouraged to participate in self-paced trainings to foster an inclusive community culture.

## Evaluation & Feedback

- Post-training surveys will be issued after each training for All Municipal Staff.
- Feedback summaries will be presented to Council with recommendations on staff training needs and progress toward 2030 compliance.
- Council will receive a report on which trainings have been completed by staff and proposed timelines for remaining modules.

# Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Goods and Services

*Submitted to the Minister of Justice  
by the Accessibility Advisory Board*

**May 2025**

The enclosed recommendations were developed by the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee and submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board in March 2025.

The Accessibility Advisory Board reviewed the recommendations, made amendments, and approved them for submission to the Minister of Justice.

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Recommendations to the Minister of Justice  
on an Accessibility Standard in Goods and Services

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# Introduction

## Introduction to the Standard Recommendations for Accessible Goods and Services

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act underscores the province's commitment to ensuring that all residents can fully participate in public life by removing barriers to accessibility. As part of this vision, the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee (SDC) was tasked with creating actionable recommendations that support inclusive and barrier-free access to goods and services across public and private sectors.

This document outlines the standard recommendations for accessible goods and services, designed to address physical, digital, and systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. These recommendations emphasize proactive measures, effective communication, and comprehensive training to ensure accessibility is embedded within service delivery practices.

The recommendations span a wide range of key areas to create a comprehensive framework for accessibility. Highlights include:

- **Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery:** Ensuring timely and accessible communication about service disruptions and available alternatives.
- **Service Delivery Feedback Processes:** Establishing robust mechanisms for collecting and addressing feedback on accessibility.
- **Service Delivery Communications:** Promoting accessible communication practices for all service interactions.
- **Service Delivery Events:** Ensuring that events are inclusive and accommodate the diverse needs of participants.
- **Service Delivery Training:** Providing essential training to equip employees, volunteers, and leaders with the knowledge to deliver barrier-free services.
- **Use of Assistive Devices:** Supporting the use of personal and provider-supplied assistive devices.
- **Guide Dogs and Service Dogs:** Ensuring access for individuals who rely on guide and service dogs.
- **Support Persons:** Accommodating support persons to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing goods and services.
- **Sign Language Interpretation:** Offering high-quality interpretation services for effective communication.
- **Policies, Practices, and Procedures:** Establishing clear, actionable policies to uphold and maintain accessibility standards.

These recommendations reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equality of opportunity for individuals with disabilities. They aim to create a foundation for sustainable and meaningful change in the delivery of goods and services, moving Nova Scotia closer to its goal of being an accessible province by 2030.

## **Background**

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, enacted in 2017, recognizes accessibility as a fundamental human right and sets a goal for an accessible province by 2030. This legislation enables the government to establish accessibility standards in key areas, including:

- Built Environment
- Education
- Employment
- Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services
- Information and Communication
- Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

In June 2023, the government committed to developing an accessibility standard specifically for goods and services. The purpose of this standard is to prevent and remove barriers that hinder individuals with disabilities from accessing and benefiting from goods and services across Nova Scotia. The scope of the standard includes ensuring accessible service delivery by public and private providers, addressing physical, digital, and systemic barriers.

Under the Accessibility Act, the Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) advises the Minister of Justice on the development of accessibility standards. To support this work, the AAB established the Goods and Services SDC composed of individuals with disabilities, representatives from service organizations, and other stakeholders. The committee's work focuses on developing recommendations for regulations that will improve accessibility and ensure inclusivity in service delivery.

## **The Standard Development Process**

The Accessibility Act outlines the following steps for developing accessibility standards:

1. The AAB establishes an SDC to assist them in developing recommendations on the content and implementation of the standard.
2. The SDC develops recommendations in consultation with community, sector, and government.
3. The AAB submits recommendations to the Minister of Justice. These recommendations are made publicly available.

4. The Minister prepares the proposed accessibility standard, adopting the AAB recommendations in whole, in part, or with modifications.
5. The Minister makes the proposed standard publicly available for comment for 60 days.
6. The Minister consults with the AAB with respect to any comments received, and revises the proposed standard, if necessary.
7. The Minister recommends the accessibility standard to the Governor-in-Council for approval as a regulation.

## **Approach to Developing Recommendations**

The Goods and Services SDC adopted a thorough and collaborative process to develop its recommendations, ensuring they address the diverse needs of Nova Scotians and align with the province's goal of accessibility by 2030.

The committee began its work by reviewing accessible customer service standards from other jurisdictions, including Ontario and Manitoba, which served as foundational models. These models were adapted through a combination of best practice research, jurisdictional analysis, and meaningful engagement with experts and individuals with lived experience to develop standard recommendations tailored to Nova Scotia's unique context.

To ensure the recommendations reflect the diverse needs of Nova Scotians, the AAB and SDC launched an engagement process to gather input from key groups. These included individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals, organizations supporting persons with disabilities, goods and services providers, prescribed public sector bodies and government departments. Feedback was collected through virtual consultation sessions and written submissions between October 14 and November 26, 2024.

The feedback gathered during consultations was incorporated into the recommendations, ensuring they are actionable, realistic, and responsive to the needs of all Nova Scotians. These recommendations will serve as a critical step toward developing a goods and services accessibility standard.

## **Applicability and Scope**

It is recommended that all businesses, organizations, and public entities that provide goods and services in Nova Scotia must comply with the recommended goods and services accessibility standard with specific exemptions for micro-businesses under defined criteria.

Recognizing the diverse capacities of businesses across Nova Scotia, it is recommended that micro-businesses of fewer than 5 employees are exempt from the standard where:

- The business operates entirely online and provides no physical access points.
- There are no employees, and the business is operated solely by the owner, with minimal external engagement.

The standard recommendations aim to ensure equitable access for all, including persons with disabilities. It is recommended that those businesses that do not meet the definition for micro-businesses but have fewer than 10 employees or annual revenue below \$500,000 may adopt alternative measures that achieve the same accessibility outcomes as prescribed in the standards but may be more feasible given their size and resources.

The remainder of this document outlines each recommendation for the goods and services accessibility standard in detail. Each recommendation includes specific actions and requirements for goods and services providers to ensure accessibility in areas such as service disruptions, feedback processes, training, and inclusive policies. Together, these recommendations provide a roadmap for achieving accessible goods and services across Nova Scotia by 2030.

# Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery

Temporary disruptions to services can significantly impact accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This recommendation ensures that goods and services providers proactively notify the public of disruptions and provide alternatives wherever possible, maintaining access to critical services.

## **Recommendation 1: Temporary Disruption of Service Delivery**

If there is a temporary disruption in service delivery, whether expected or unexpected, the goods and services provider must give notice of the disruption to the public as soon as it is reasonably possible. For expected disruptions, pre-scheduled notifications should be provided.

The notice of temporary disruption must include:

- The nature of the disrupted service.
- The reason for the disruption.
- The anticipated length of the disruption.
- Contact information.
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The goods and services provider must:

- Prominently display the temporary disruption notice in an accessible area on the premises, which is owned or operated by the goods and services provider.
- Post the temporary disruption notice online on a public digital platform such as the organization's website, email notifications to affected users and/or active social media feeds.
- Notify people that this document is available on request in accessible formats.
- Provide a copy of the document to anyone who requests it in accessible formats.

Where circumstances make immediate notification challenging (e.g., fire or online service outages), the goods and services provider should take reasonable steps to inform the public using alternative means as soon as possible.

This recommendation applies to temporary disruptions on physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, and digital spaces (e.g., email, websites, social media feed, etc.).

# Service Delivery Feedback Process

A well-structured feedback process is essential for identifying and addressing accessibility issues in service delivery. This recommendation ensures that individuals can provide feedback easily and that the goods and services provider respond in a timely and transparent manner.

## **Recommendation 2: Service Delivery Feedback Process**

Every goods and services provider must establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the accessibility of its service delivery and accessibility of the feedback process itself. This process should consider both the physical and digital spaces in feedback on service delivery.

Every goods and services provider must:

- Make information about the feedback process available to the public in accessible formats.
- Offer multiple ways for people to provide feedback (e.g., phone, in person, online). Email must be included as an option for submitting feedback and receiving responses. Additional methods must be made available upon request to ensure communication occurs in the format most accessible and comfortable for the individual (e.g., American Sign Language, spoken, plain language).
- Acknowledge receipt of feedback within 72 hours, providing a confirmation of receipt and an initial timeline for response.
- Respond with a plan to address the issue within 20 days of receiving the feedback.
- Provide regular updates, especially for issues that may take longer to resolve, and ensure complaints are addressed within a reasonable timeframe based on the nature and requirements of the issue.
- Keep a record of the feedback received, including the actions taken to address it and the time taken to resolve each issue.
- Give individuals the opportunity to communicate concerns and provide feedback on the feedback process itself.

# Service Delivery Communications

Accessible communication is key to ensuring inclusive service delivery. This recommendation focuses on ensuring that the goods and services provider's communication practices are clear, effective, and accessible to all, addressing both physical and digital communication needs.

## **Recommendation 3: Service Delivery Communications**

This recommendation aims to ensure that the goods and services provider's communication practices are accessible to people with disabilities. This could include but is not limited to providing information in multiple formats and ensuring that signage and information displays are clear and accessible. Each goods and services provider must train staff to understand different communication needs and the basics of accessible communication. Specialized training (e.g., learning sign language) is not required. The goal is to help staff recognize when specific communication needs arise and know how to provide or arrange the right support.

Each goods and services provider must ensure that when communicating with a person with a disability, the communication takes into account the person's disability.

# Service Delivery Events

Public events must be accessible to all members of the community. This recommendation ensures that event notices, venues, and participation methods are designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities, fostering inclusivity and equal access.

## **Recommendation 4: Service Delivery Events**

Every goods and services provider who holds events must ensure that the notice of the event is accessible. This includes ensuring that notices are available in multiple formats and that options are available on request.

This applies to events on the goods and services provider's physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, and digital spaces.

This recommended standard applies to events that are:

- Public-facing or open to members of the public.
- Designed to engage the community, provide services, or share information.

Small, private, or informal gatherings that are not open to the public (e.g., staff-only meetings, social gatherings unrelated to service delivery, or spontaneous discussions) are excluded.

Every goods and services provider who holds events must ensure that:

- Any registration for an event is accessible.
- Accessibility options are proactively promoted in event communications. This includes clearly outlining how to request specific accommodations, such as sign language interpreters or assistive devices, and providing deadlines for such requests when necessary.

Every goods and services provider must take reasonable measures to ensure that the event is held in a physical or digital space that is accessible. This includes:

- Seeking out accessible venues or digital platforms as a first priority.
- Providing information about the accessibility features of the chosen venue or platform.
- Offering alternative formats or participation methods if a fully accessible venue or platform is not available. For example, providing a livestream for a physical event that is not fully accessible.
- Documenting efforts to secure an accessible space and explaining why it was not possible if an accessible venue or platform could not be found.

Every goods and services provider must ensure that the communication needs of persons with disabilities are met on request. This may involve but is not limited to providing real-time access to communication (e.g., live captioning, Sign Language Interpretation) and ensuring these options are promoted and available on request.

# Service Delivery Training

Proper training equips goods and services providers to meet the accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities. This recommendation outlines essential training requirements to ensure that staff, volunteers, and leadership are prepared to deliver inclusive and barrier-free services.

## **Recommendation 5: Service Delivery Training**

Every goods and services provider must ensure that the following people receive service delivery training, whether new or current:

- Employees
- Agents and regular volunteers
- Management and leadership
- People who participate in, or are responsible for, the development or implementation of the goods and services provider's policies.
- All other people who provide service delivery on behalf of a goods and services provider.
- Board Members
- Elected Officials

Every goods and services provider must ensure that training content is provided in accessible formats if requested and includes:

- A review of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.
- A review of the Accessibility Act.
- A review of the requirements in the Goods and Services Standard.
- How to interact and communicate with individuals who are Deaf and those with disabilities, considering all methods of communication, including plain language and sign languages.
- Consider awareness of disability, including visible and invisible, episodic and temporary ones.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a support person or service dog.
- How to use any equipment or assistive devices available on the goods and services provider's premises, or otherwise provided by the goods and services provider, online or in person, that may help with service delivery for people with disabilities (e.g., a scooter provided by a grocery store for shopping).
- What to do if a person with a disability finds barriers when accessing the provider's service delivery.

- How intersecting identities may impact service delivery.
- These interactions include phone, in person, and virtual communication methods.
- How to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in service delivery, whether this is done by humans or are through computers, or artificial intelligence.

The Government of Nova Scotia must curate or develop resources to assist employers in meeting the requirements of the accessible goods and services standard. These resources, including training materials, must be available via a central resource hub for employers before the standard is enacted and available in accessible formats.

People with lived or living experience of disabilities must be actively involved in both the development and provision of training. Their involvement can take various forms, such as:

- Direct participation in creating and delivering training.
- Providing consultation and guidance to ensure the training is effective and inclusive.

Additionally, employers must not rely solely on government-provided materials in instances where specialized training is required for specific services offered. Employers must ensure that additional or customized training is provided when the general training does not adequately cover the specific needs and services of the employer. This ensures that all specialized training needs are met and that the training is relevant to the unique demands of the service provided.

The goods and services provider must ensure training is provided:

- As soon as is reasonably possible, after the person has been assigned the duties, or if the person is already performing the duties, when the standard applies to the goods and services provider.
- Refresher training must be provided at least every three years to ensure that all individuals stay informed about updates to accessibility standards, policies, and best practices.

# Use of Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are any equipment, hardware, software, apps, computers, or devices used in physical or virtual spaces. These devices may be used by people to help them with all aspects of life.

## **Recommendation 6: Assistive Devices**

Each goods and services provider must recognize that a person with a disability may use assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers to access, use, and benefit from service delivery, and the measures and practices that the organization implements must reasonably accommodate the use of these devices.

Each goods and services provider must ensure staff are trained to:

- Recognize and accommodate assistive devices brought by individuals.
- Provide guidance on the proper use of assistive devices made available by the provider.

Refresher training should be provided at least every three years to ensure continued knowledge of updates to policies, and changes in assistive technology.

This recommendation applies to both devices that the person already uses and brings with them to the goods and services provider (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, computer devices, or magnifiers) and devices that the goods and services provider may provide to the public (e.g., on-site wheeled mobility devices, automatic doors, or widgets on their website for voice-to-text).

If the goods and services provider requires the use of a specific assistive device for accessing services, then the provider must waive payment of the amount, if any, for the use of that device.

If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the use of assistive devices.

# Guide Dogs and Service Dogs

In developing these recommendations, the Goods and Services SDC engaged in extensive discussions about the inclusion of guide dogs, service dogs, service animals, and emotional support animals. The committee recognizes the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities and the importance of balancing inclusion with clarity and enforceability.

Based on the consultation(s) and to align with current Nova Scotia legislation, the committee is proposing to the AAB to limit the current recommendations to guide dogs and service dogs.

While guide dogs and service dogs are recognized under Nova Scotia legislation, including the Blind Persons' Rights Act and the Service Dog Act, which establish clear standards for training and certification, there is currently no equivalent framework for service animals or emotional support animals in the province.

The committee acknowledges that some individuals with disabilities require the use of emotional support animals or service animals that are not dogs to mitigate their disability. The lack of certification standards for service animals and potential misuse of provisions related to service animals or emotional support animals could undermine the rights and experiences of individuals who rely on trained, certified guide or service dogs. Furthermore, given this disparity on certification and training, goods and services providers may also experience a lack of clarity when providing services to persons whose service animals accompany them.

As training and certification requirements for service animals are developed, it will be essential that future engagements explore how to support the needs of individuals who may benefit from the companionship and calming presence of emotional support animals (e.g., individuals with mental health conditions, sensory processing disorders, etc.), while also addressing concerns about training and certification.

To ensure the current recommendations remain practical and enforceable within existing frameworks, the focus of the current recommendation is limited to guide dogs and service dogs as defined in the Nova Scotia Blind Persons' Rights Act and the Service Dog Act.

## **Recommendation 7: Guide Dogs and Service Dogs**

Each goods and services provider, in their policies, must recognize that a person with a disability may use a guide dog or service dog to remove or reduce barriers to access and/or use and benefit from service delivery. The measures and practices that the organization implements must reasonably accommodate the use of guide dogs and service dogs.

In Nova Scotia, we have the Service Dog Act. This recommended standard is intended to complement but does not supersede the provisions of the Blind Persons' Rights Act or the Service Dog Act.

Organizations need to ensure that any signs, rules or webpages that say, "no dogs" or "no pets" are changed to say, "no dogs, except guide dogs or service dogs" or "no pets, except guide dogs or service dogs".

Guide dogs and service dogs must be trained and certified to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability. Training must be conducted by a person or establishment specializing in the training of guide dogs or service dogs.

If a person with a disability has a service dog with them, the goods and services provider must ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the dog, and that the person with a disability always has access to the guide dog or service dog.

This applies to physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, where the public, and third parties, can access service delivery except where dogs are excluded by law from premises.

If a guide dog or service dog is excluded by law, the goods and services provider must inform the person of the law, and then in consultation with the person, must ensure that an alternative, or other measures is available, so that the person can obtain, use or benefit from the service delivery.

The goods and services provider must not charge a fee for the guide dog or service dog. If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the guide dog or service dog.

The person with the guide dog or service dog is responsible for its actions while on the premises of the goods and services provider.

# Support Persons

Support persons play a vital role in helping individuals with disabilities access and benefit from services. Their role is distinct and separate from that of sign language interpreters, as they provide different forms of support tailored to individual needs. In some cases, an individual may require both a support person and a sign language interpreter. This recommendation ensures that policies accommodate the presence of support persons and eliminate financial and procedural barriers to their assistance.

## **Recommendation 8: Support Persons**

Each goods and services provider, in their policies, must recognize that individuals with disabilities may need support persons to remove or reduce barriers to accessing, using and benefiting from services. A goods and services provider's policies should reasonably accommodate the use of support persons.

This applies to physical premises, owned or operated by the goods and services provider, where the public, and third parties, can access service delivery. This can also include people using assistive devices to access support people, and other digital or virtual means of support (e.g., a telepresence or virtual support).

If a person with a disability has a support person(s) with them, the goods and services provider must:

- Ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together.
- Ensure that the person with a disability always has access to the support person.

In some cases, a goods and services provider may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons. If so:

- The goods and services provider must first consult with the person with a disability to explore all alternatives.
- If no alternatives are available and the person with a disability consents, the goods and services provider may require a support person, but only if it's necessary to protect the health or safety of the person or others.
- The goods and services provider must document the justification for requiring a support person and outline how the determination was made, including any applicable health or safety assessments.

The goods and services provider must not charge a fee for a support person, or persons to be admitted to, or present, at the premises or online. A support person must be admitted free of charge in all cases where they are actively assisting an individual with a disability. If the support person is not providing direct support, regular admission fees apply.

If this causes undue hardship, then a reasonable fee may apply. The goods and services provider must ensure that advance notice is given about the fee amount, if any, for the support person, or persons.

If the goods and services provider requires a support person, or persons to accompany the person with a disability on the premises, then the goods and services provider must waive payment of the amount, if any, for the support person, or persons.

The goods and services provider must comply with relevant legislation that may require that a support person be of a certain age if age restrictions are applied by law to individuals accessing, using, and benefiting from services (e.g., the Liquor Control Act).

# Sign Language Interpretation

Sign language interpreters play a crucial role in facilitating effective communication between Deaf and non-Deaf individuals to ensure inclusive and accessible interactions.

It is important to note that sign language interpreters are not support persons. They are professionals who are provided to facilitate communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people.

Sign language interpreters can be either Deaf or hearing. In some cases, they work together as a team to provide accurate and culturally appropriate interpretation.

Sign language interpretation services can be used synchronously with assisted services, devices, and/or supports.

## **Recommendation 9: Sign Language Interpretation**

Each goods and services provider must ensure that sign language interpreters are made available upon request. The responsibility for the cost of these services must not be placed on the Deaf individual.

The following applies only to prescribed public sector bodies.

All prescribed public sector bodies must make sign language interpretation services available upon request, ensuring effective communication and full participation for all Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

To ensure high-quality services, the sign language interpreters provided must be members of the Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI). CASLI members adhere to a code of ethics and ethical practice, guaranteeing professionalism and reliability.

All prescribed public sector bodies must have a policy and procedure for requesting and providing sign language interpretation services. This policy must apply to all departments and services within Nova Scotia that interact with the public, including but not limited to healthcare, education, public services, and events.

The policy must include a statement of commitment to providing equal access to information and services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. The policy must also include:

- Details on how requests can be made.
- Information on the advance notice required for requests for sign language interpreters.
- Procedures for accommodating urgent or emergency requests.
- Who is responsible for processing requests, scheduling sign language interpreters, and ensuring that all parties are informed of the arrangements.

- Details on how confidentiality will be maintained for requests and the information shared during the interpretation. This should be in accordance with privacy laws and regulations.
- Methods for receiving feedback from Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals on the interpretation services.
- Processes for handling and resolving complaints or concerns.
- A commitment to annual reviews and updates to reflect changes in regulations, best practices, or community needs.

All prescribed public sector bodies must ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and the procedure for requesting sign language interpreters.

The cost of sign language interpretation services will be covered by the prescribed public sector body. The Government of Nova Scotia must provide adequate funding to prescribed public sector bodies to be able to support these services.

# Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Clear policies, practices, and procedures are key to successfully putting accessibility standards into action and ensuring accountability. This recommendation ensures goods and services providers create, document, and regularly update their policies to follow the standards once they are finalized.

## **Recommendation 10: Policies, Practices, and Procedures**

Every goods and services provider must develop, implement, and maintain one policy, or multiple policies, that document how the goods and services provider achieves, or will achieve accessibility, in person and virtually, through meeting its requirements in each of the sections of this recommended standard:

- Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery
- Service Delivery Feedback Process
- Service Delivery Communications
- Service Delivery Events
- Service Delivery Training
- Use of Assistive Devices
- Guide Dogs and Service Dogs
- Support Persons
- Sign language Interpretation

Each policy must include the corresponding practices and procedures that show how the goods and services provider will meet the requirements outlined in each section of this standard. These policies, practices, and procedures must also align with the duty to provide reasonable accommodations under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

The policy (or policies) must include a statement of commitment to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, without cost, wherever possible.

In developing, implementing and maintaining the policy (or policies), practices, and procedures, every goods and services provider must try to ensure they are consistent with four principles:

- a. The goods, services or facilities must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b. The provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities must be integrated with the provision of goods, services or facilities to others, unless an

alternative measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods, services or facilities.

- c.** Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods, services or facilities.
- d.** When communicating with a person with a disability, the goods and services provider must do so in a manner that considers the individual's identified barriers or accessibility needs.

Every goods and services provider must:

- Notify people that the policy (or policies) is available on request and must provide a copy of the document to anyone who requests it.
- Make the document(s) available in accessible formats.
- Prominently display the policy in an accessible area on the premises.
- Post the information online, on a website, online information page, or other public site (including social media). If a website is not available, the policy must be shared through alternative means, such as printed materials or by email upon request.

Policies, practices, and procedures must be reviewed and updated at least every three years to reflect changes in accessibility standards, best practices, or organizational changes.

Small businesses (i.e., fewer than 10 employees or annual revenue below \$500,000) with limited resources may align reviews with significant operational changes instead of adhering to a fixed timeline, provided updates are made promptly when gaps are identified.

# Glossary of Terms

## **Accessibility Services**

Programs, services, processes, and policies related to accessibility accommodations, communication, language interpretation, assistive technology, and others that ensure access to goods and services.

## **Accessible**

Free of substantial barriers that hinder enjoyment in all aspects of life, allowing equal access to services, information, and physical environments. When a space or item can be used or experienced by the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age, and other forms of human difference on an equivalent basis with others.

## **Accessible Formats**

Current, quality print, electronic, audio, or visual material that is formatted so that all people with disabilities and Deaf people can equitably access the information presented. This may include (but is not limited to) ensuring compatibility with appropriate assistive technology, captioning, described video, large print, plain language, braille, translation and interpretation to sign language, easy read, and video transcripts. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Actively Assisting**

Refers to a support person directly and purposefully providing the necessary assistance to enable an individual with a disability to access, use, or benefit from a service. Examples of "actively assisting" could include but are not limited to:

- Helping with mobility (e.g., guiding or stabilizing the individual, pushing a wheelchair).
- Assisting with communication (e.g., facilitating conversations, reading documents aloud).
- Providing personal care (e.g., helping with eating, toileting, or managing medication).
- Offering guidance or clarification during complex procedures or activities.
- Assisting individuals with cognitive or neurological disabilities (e.g., helping someone with autism navigate social interactions, manage sensory challenges, or stay focused during an activity).

## **Assistive Devices**

Equipment, hardware, software, apps, or other devices used to aid people with disabilities and Deaf people in both physical and digital spaces, allowing them to participate in and enjoy all aspects of life. This may include but is not limited to wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, computer devices, or magnifiers.

## **Barrier**

Anything that hinders or challenges the enjoyment of all aspects of life for people with disabilities and Deaf people. Barriers may be systemic, structural and individual, and can take the form of physical barriers, architecture, information, communications, attitudes, technology, policies, or practices. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)<sup>1</sup>

## **Deaf**

A sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on sign language. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **deaf**

A medical/ audiological term referring to those people who have little or no functional hearing. May also refer to people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Disability**

A physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full enjoyment of all aspects of life. Some people may not have a diagnosed disability but still experience accessibility barriers. Others who experience accessibility barriers may not identify as having a disability. This may include people who are Deaf, those who identify as neurodivergent, those who have a chronic illness or condition, and others. In this document, the term "people with disabilities" is intended to include all people who experience accessibility barriers.

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<sup>1</sup> Attitudinal barriers are unfair or negative opinions about others based on their disability or the intersection of disability with race, gender, and age. These attitudes develop over time and are influenced by both internal and external experiences. Attitudinal barriers can hinder effective communication, understanding, and connection with others.

## **Digital Space**

Any online platform used by the goods and services provider. This may include but is not limited to email, websites, or social media feeds.

## **Disruption of Service Delivery**

Temporary interruption or change of services provided by the goods and services provider, whether expected or unexpected, that affects physical premises or digital spaces.

## **Equity/ Equitable**

Equity means ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access and participate in the full enjoyment of all aspects of life. This means expecting and welcoming diversity, understanding and addressing discriminatory and exclusionary systems, practices, and policies, and removing specific and diverse barriers to access and participation. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education)

## **Event**

An event is any organized gathering, meeting, or activity initiated by a goods and services provider, intended for public participation or attendance, whether held in physical or digital spaces. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- Public meetings, town halls, and forums.
- Cultural, recreational, and social activities.
- Training sessions and educational programs.
- Webinars, virtual meetings, and online presentations.

### **Exclusions:**

The following are generally excluded from this definition:

- Private gatherings not open to the public.
- Informal, spontaneous meetings without prior organization.

## **Goods and Services Provider**

A goods and services provider refers to any organization, business, or entity that offers goods, services, or facilities to the public, either directly or indirectly, regardless of its size, sector, or type of ownership. This encompasses public sector providers (e.g., government departments, publicly funded institutions), private sector providers (e.g., retail stores, professional service firms), nonprofit and community organizations (e.g., charitable

organizations, advocacy groups), online or digital providers (e.g., e-commerce sites, online education platforms), and event or space operators (e.g., venues for public use, rental providers for events). These providers are responsible for ensuring their services are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities, in compliance with Nova Scotia's accessibility legislation.

## **Guide Dog**

A guide dog is defined, in accordance with the Blind Persons' Rights Act, as a dog specifically trained to assist individuals with visual impairments.

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a way of looking at how all the different parts that make up a person (i.e., their gender, race, class, disability, etc.) can come together to affect how they are treated in society. It helps us understand how these different aspects can lead to both advantages and disadvantages for a person. Intersectionality helps us see and address the various ways people can face discrimination or privilege based on these different factors. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment)

## **Plain Language**

Communication is in plain language when it is written or presented in a way that is easy for the intended audience to understand. This means the words, structure, and design are clear, helping people quickly find the information they need and use it effectively. For example, this includes using short sentences, avoiding jargon and technical terms or complex words. (Source: Accessibility Advisory Board's Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Employment, Adapted from What is plain language?)

## **Service Dog**

As defined in the Service Dog Act, a "service dog" is a dog that is trained to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability and is certified as a service dog.

## **Sign Language Interpreters**

Sign language interpreters are not support persons. They are professionals who are provided to facilitate communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people. Sign language interpreters can be either Deaf, hearing, or a combination of both. Sign language interpretation services can be used synchronously with assisted services, devices, and/or supports.

## **Support Person**

An individual who accompanies a person with a disability or Deaf person to assist with communications, personal care, or accessing and benefiting from service delivery, whether on physical premises or through digital means.

## **Undue Hardship**

An action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of a number of factors. These factors include the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, resources, nature, and structure of the goods and services provider.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis. The burden of proof that an undue hardship prevents removal of a barrier rests with the goods and services provider on reasonable grounds communicated promptly to the person impacted.

# Appendix – List of Members

## Current Members

- **Travis Gunn, Chair**  
Chief Operating Officer, MacQuarries Pharmasave Group, Scotsburn
- **John Smith, Vice-Chair**  
Chair, Annapolis County Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA) Committee, Bridgetown
- **Kimberley Bernard**  
Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, Halifax
- **Colin Campbell**  
Manager of Equity Programs and Initiatives, Department of Health and Wellness, Halifax (until October 2024)  
Director, Government and Community Relations, African Nova Scotian Affairs (from October 2024)
- **Kim Bates Cusack**  
Accessibility Advocate, Bateson
- **Natalie d' Entremont**  
Director, Recreation Services, Municipality of the District of Argyle, Lower West Pubnico
- **Louise Gillis**  
Immediate Past President at Canadian Council of the Blind, Sydney
- **Rick Goodman, KC**  
Non-practicing Advisor, Patterson Law and Chairperson, Accessibility Committee, Abercrombie Golf Club, New Glasgow
- **Lui Greco**  
Lead, Information Technology and Accessibility, CNIB, Eastern Passage
- **Janice Hussey**  
Coordinator, Disability Support Program, Department of Opportunities and Social Development, Halifax
- **Misty James**  
Director of Recreation, Municipality of Barrington
- **Jordan Keddy**  
Policy Analyst, Privy Council Office, Government of Canada, Waverley
- **Cassie Manuel**  
Physical Activity Consultant and Inclusion Specialist, Dartmouth

- **Jorge Mora**  
Manager Fund Accounting, SS&C Fund Services and Multiple Sclerosis and Disability Advocate, Bedford
- **Steven William Murgatroyd**  
Canadian Forces Retired Sergeant, DND and High Performance Director, Archery Nova Scotia, West Hants
- **Zoh Qureshi**  
Faculty Member, Nova Scotia Community College
- **Justin Read**  
Instructor, NSCC, Halifax
- **Steve Roy**  
Project and Administrative Coordinator, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Dartmouth
- **John Turner**  
Environmental Lab Technician and Disability Advocate, Halifax
- **Hannah Wood**  
CEO, Fulcrum Accessibility Consulting, Halifax
- **Michelle Simpson**  
Director, Corporate Strategy, Service Nova Scotia- Procurement

## Past Members

- **Lisa Snider, Chair**  
Senior Digital Accessibility Consultant and Trainer, Access Changes Everything Inc, Halifax
- **Alex Oragui**  
Manager, Diversity and Sustainable Procurement, Department of Service Nova Scotia Internal Services, Halifax
- **Jen Christofi**  
Manager, Inclusion and Accessibility, Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, Halifax

# Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Goods and Services

## Summary

*Submitted to the Minister of Justice  
by the Accessibility Advisory Board*

*May 2025*

This is a summary of recommendations developed by the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee and submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board in March 2025.

The Accessibility Advisory Board reviewed, made amendments, and approved the recommendations for submission to the Minister of Justice.

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Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on  
an Accessibility Standard in Goods and Services  
Summary

# Introduction

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act enables Government to develop and enact accessibility standard regulations in various areas, including goods and services. The Accessibility Advisory Board is responsible for developing recommendations for the Minister of Justice on accessibility standards. The Goods and Services Standard Development Committee (SDC) was created to help the Accessibility Advisory Board develop recommendations on the accessibility standard in goods and services.

The recommendations are designed to address barriers in service delivery, including physical, digital and systemic barriers. They include specific actions and requirements for goods and services providers to ensure accessibility in areas such as service disruptions, feedback processes, training, communications, and inclusive policies. The recommendations also include areas such as assistive devices, guide dogs and service dogs, support persons, and sign language interpreters.

The recommendations apply to all businesses, organizations and public entities that provide goods and services in Nova Scotia. There are specific exemptions for micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees or annual revenue less than \$500,000. These recommendations apply to services delivered both on physical premises and within digital spaces.

The Goods and Services SDC held consultations to gather feedback on their recommendations. The following groups provided feedback: persons with disabilities, organizations supporting persons with disabilities, goods and services providers, prescribed public sector bodies (PPSBs), and government departments. PPSBs include municipalities, libraries, health authorities, education organizations, and crown corporations.

The following is a summary of the content of the recommendations.

# Recommendations for a Goods and Services Accessibility Standard

## **Recommendation 1 – Temporary Disruptions of Service Delivery**

Temporary disruptions to services can significantly impact accessibility for people with disabilities in accessing, using and benefiting from goods and services. This recommendation requires goods and services providers to notify the public of disruptions and provide information about alternatives to maintaining access to critical services.

## **Recommendation 2 – Service Delivery Feedback Processes**

Feedback processes are important in understanding the needs of people with disabilities and improving the accessibility of service delivery. The recommendation requires goods and services providers to create a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the accessibility of its service delivery, and the feedback process itself.

## **Recommendation 3 – Service Delivery Communications**

This recommendation addresses barriers people with disabilities experience when communicating with goods and services providers. The recommendation requires that goods and services providers deliver information in multiple formats, and make sure signage and displays are clear and accessible. Goods and services providers must train staff to understand different communication needs and the basics of accessible communication to help staff recognize different communication needs and respond accordingly.

## **Recommendation 4 – Service Delivery Events**

This recommendation requires that goods and services providers ensure that event announcements, registration processes, venues, and participation options for public events are accessible to people with disabilities. Small, private or informal gatherings are exempt. The recommendation also requires goods and services providers to ensure different communication options are promoted, and available upon request, to meet the communication needs of people with disabilities at the public event.

## **Recommendation 5 – Service Delivery Training**

Staff, volunteers, and leaders need to be prepared to deliver inclusive and accessible services. Therefore, this recommendation states that goods and services providers will be required to provide training to those delivering services.

It is also recommended that the Government of Nova Scotia be required to support goods and services providers in creating the training by providing them with resources through a central hub, in accessible formats. The recommendations require that people with disabilities must be involved with developing and/or providing the training as well.

## **Recommendation 6 – Use of Assistive Devices**

Assistive devices include equipment, hardware, software, apps, etc. They are used by people with disabilities to address barriers with accessing, using and benefiting from service delivery. This recommendation requires goods and services providers to implement measures and practices to reasonably accommodate the use of these devices when delivering goods and services.

## **Recommendation 7 – Guide Dogs and Service Dogs**

Guide dogs and service dogs support people with disabilities when using services. To complement the Nova Scotia Blind Persons' Rights Act and the Service Dog Act, this recommendation requires goods and services providers to recognize in their policies that a person with a disability may use a guide dog or service dog to remove barriers when accessing, using or benefiting from service delivery. Goods and services providers must also implement measures and practices to ensure people who use guide dogs and/or service dogs are reasonably accommodated when accessing, using or benefiting from service delivery.

## **Recommendation 8 – Support Persons**

Support persons are people who help people with disabilities access and benefit from service delivery. This recommendation requires goods and services providers to ensure policies accommodate the presence of support persons and eliminate financial and procedural barriers, up until undue hardship.

## **Recommendation 9 – Sign Language Interpretation**

Sign language interpreters facilitate effective communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people to ensure inclusive and accessible interactions. This recommendation requires goods and services providers to ensure that sign language interpreters are made available upon request at no cost to the Deaf person.

There are additional requirements in the recommendation for PPSBs to facilitate effective sign language interpretation services when delivering goods and services, including developing a policy to provide sign language interpretation. There is also a requirement that the Government of Nova Scotia must provide adequate funding to PPSBs to support sign language interpretation services.

## **Recommendation 10 – Policies, Practices, and Procedures**

Policies, practices, and procedures are needed to implement standards and ensure accountability. This recommendation requires goods and services providers to make policies, practices, and procedures for recommendations 1 through 9. The recommendation outlines the requirements for policies, practices, and procedures, including what must be included, when to review, and how to promote them, with exemptions for micro-businesses.

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager

FROM: Krista Crossman, Director, Human Resources

DATE: September 9, 2025

SUBJECT: **Review of AIDE Training Manual and Next Steps**

---

## Overview

I have reviewed the AIDE Training Manual and would like to provide several considerations as we move forward in aligning training initiatives with our broader People Strategy.

## Key Considerations

### 1. Role and Department-Specific Training

- Training delivery should be targeted by role and/or department to ensure practicality, maximize impact, and avoid a “check-the-box” learning experience. Tailored training will better connect the AIDE principles to the real challenges faced in specific work contexts.

### 2. Integration with Training & Development Program (2026 Budget)

- HR is in the process of developing a comprehensive Training and Development Program for inclusion in the 2026 operating budget for all staff.
- Many of the suggested AIDE trainings will be assessed and incorporated into this program in order to advance the goals outlined in the AIDE Strategic Plan.

### 3. Foundations of Belonging Training

- HR has signed an access agreement to provide the *Foundations of Belonging Training* for all Town Hall staff and managers (approximately 60 initial participants). Roll-out of the training is anticipated in October. This comprehensive 11-module program (delivered by Placemaking 4G in partnership with Skills OnlineNS) addresses core areas of diversity, inclusion, and belonging, including:
  - **Disrupting Bias:** understanding how biases form and how to disrupt them in practice.
  - **Privileged Aggressions:** exploring the impact of “micro” aggressions and strategies to repair harm.
  - **Stereotyping :** causes, consequences, and ways to interrupt stereotyping.
  - **Privilege & Power:** examining privilege, racism, and applying an anti-racist lens in the workplace.
  - **Creating Accessible Workplaces:** addressing barriers and strategies for inclusion.
  - **Cross-Cultural Communication:** communicating effectively and respectfully across differences.
  - **Allyship in Practice:** defining and demonstrating meaningful allyship.
  - **Becoming a Leader in Diversity & Belonging:** building inclusive leadership skills.

- **Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work:** fostering psychologically safe and inclusive teams.
  - **Influencing Organizational Change:** using tools and strategies to shift systems and lead change.
- After the first round of training is delivered, consideration will be given to broadening the program to include other staff, with the intention of sharing the benefits of accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equity across the organization.

### **Conclusion**

By combining the AIDE Training Manual with tailored delivery and the Foundations of Belonging initiative and embedding both within our upcoming Training & Development Program, we are taking meaningful steps to create a more inclusive, engaged, and resilient workplace culture.

# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee  
**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being  
**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
**RE: Government of Canada Technical Guides**

---

Accessible Standards Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada have produced three technical guides to support organizations on their accessibility journey.

They provide informal guidance, information based on recent research and their recommendations for best practices with accessibility. Accessibility Standards Canada is sharing these technical guides so that organizations can begin implementing this guidance in their work.

1. Procurement of Accessible Goods
2. Procurement of Accessible Services
3. Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services, Including Customer Services

These technical guides will help users understand the barriers faced by people with disabilities and provide practical guidance and recommendations to help remove those barriers proactively to support the goals and principles of the Accessible Canada Act. They provide users with quick and easy access to important information to improve accessibility features.

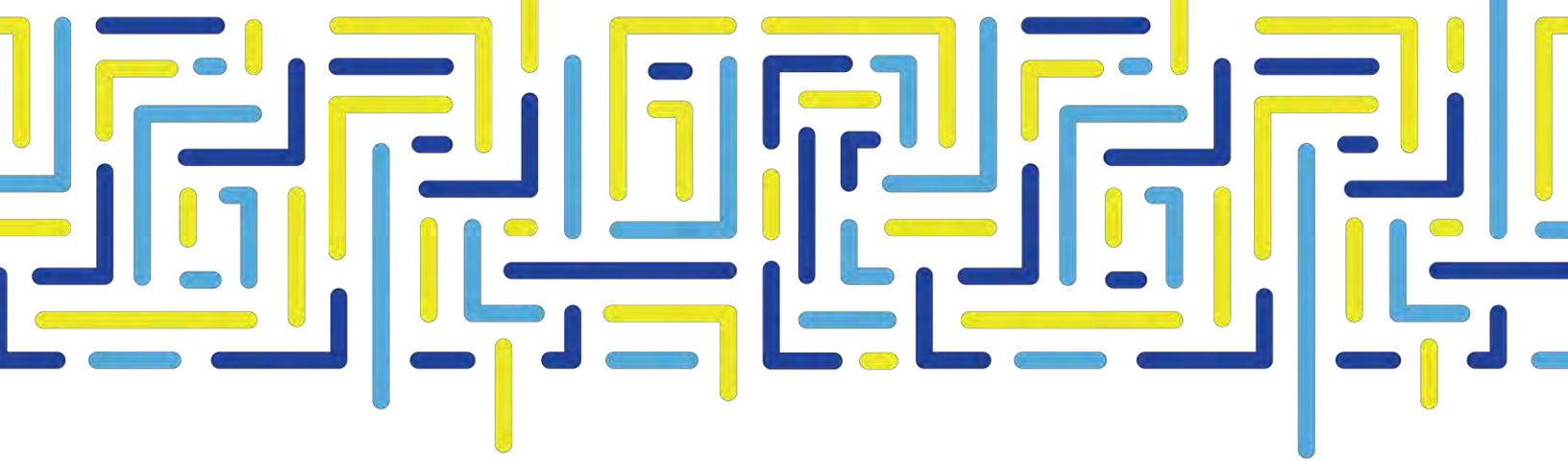
Staff will share these technical guides with the appropriate departments as well as anyone in the community who is seeking guidance on how to improve accessibility in the forementioned areas.

**Attached:**

technical\_guide\_-\_design\_and\_delivery\_of\_accessible\_programs\_and\_services

technicalguide-procurementofaccessiblegoods

technicalguide-procurementofaccessibleservices



# Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services, Including Customer Services

July 29, 2025

## Technical Guide



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The publication is available in HTML format at

<https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/technical-guide-design-and-delivery-accessible-programs-and-services-including-customer-services>

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[accessible.canada.ca](https://accessible.canada.ca)

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## 2 About this technical guide

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Accessibility Standards Canada develops equity-based accessibility standards and guidance. Accessibility Standards Canada seeks to create inclusive standards that can impact all persons with disabilities while recognizing their intersectionality and expertise. Accessibility Standards Canada is sharing this technical guide so that organizations can begin implementing this guidance in their work while a standard in this area is being developed. This technical guide focuses on areas where people with disabilities may face barriers related to accessible design and delivery of programs and services including customer service. This includes the policies, procedures, practices, and structures which are delivered to clients and/or the public. Equity refers to fairness, justice, and freedom from discrimination. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and focuses on enabling all individuals to achieve the same outcomes.

### 2.1 Audience

This technical guide is intended for all Government of Canada departments, agencies, and federally regulated entities as well as anyone seeking guidance to improve accessibility in this area.

## 3 Context

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

### 3.1 General

Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides that align with its vision. This vision is rooted in the principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us”. These principles reflect a commitment to breaking down barriers to accessibility that can impact all persons in Canada—especially persons with disabilities and their families—ensuring full and equal participation in society.

As part of the “nothing without us” principle, Accessibility Standards Canada promotes that accessibility is good for everyone, as it can have society-wide benefits. As a result, Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides to promote accessibility and accessible best practices. This means that this technical guide incorporates best practices, the lived experience of people with disabilities, and information aimed at achieving the highest level of accessibility. This approach is meant to drive innovation, foster change, and promote requirements and best practices that have broad positive impacts.

This approach strives to improve outcomes for all Canadians, including creating employment opportunities and solutions that contribute to Canada’s economic growth.

By proactively removing barriers, these guides' support the key accessibility principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us”, support organizations on their accessibility journeys, and move Canada closer to being barrier-free by 2040. The technical content of this guide benefits:

- people with disabilities;
- people without disabilities;
- the federal public sector;
- the private sector;
- non-government organizations;
- Indigenous communities; and
- society.

The guidance provided in section 4 supports the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

## **3.2 *Accessible Canada Act***

The *Accessible Canada Act* provides a framework which allows for the proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers wherever Canadians interact with areas under federal jurisdiction. It puts in place mechanisms that would systematically address accessibility. The purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in the following priority areas:

- employment;
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces);
- 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; and
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders)

### **3.3 *Accessible Canada Act* consultations**

To inform the development of the *Accessible Canada Act*, in 2016-2017 the Government of Canada undertook the largest and most accessible consultation on disability issues that Canada has ever seen. Over 6000 Canadians and over 90 organizations shared their ideas about an accessible Canada. Participants wanted the legislation to apply to all areas under the control of the Government of Canada and that Canada should become a leader in accessibility. While participants acknowledged that the development and implementation of some standards will take longer than others, they noted guidance should be clear and any accessibility requirements should lead to positive lasting change.

The "nothing without us" principle means that people with disabilities are engaged and involved in the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers. This also means consulting and working closely with people with disabilities, diverse disability communities and other experts to develop accessibility guidance to remove barriers. The principle of "nothing without us" drives everything we do at Accessibility Standards Canada, including relying on the knowledge and experiences of people with disabilities in the development of accessibility guidance.

## 3.4 Key Accessible Canada Act principles

The *Act* is to be implemented in recognition of, and in accordance with, the following principles:

- everyone must be treated with dignity;
- everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able and wish to have;
- everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society;
- everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire;
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kinds of barriers and discrimination intersect;
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility.

## 3.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. The United Nations Convention protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has served as the major catalyst in the global movement towards viewing persons with disabilities as full and equal members of society. The human rights approach has moved away from viewing persons with disabilities as subjects of charity, medical treatment and social protection. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act were foundational human rights frameworks that support equity on which the *Accessible Canada Act* was built.

# 4 Guidance: understanding the impact

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

## 4.1 Introduction

Twenty-seven percent of Canadians identify as having one or more disabilities and this number will only increase as our population ages.

The *Accessible Canada Act* calls on individuals and organizations to make society more equitable and inclusive by designing and delivering programs and services (including customer service) in an accessible manner. Intentionally designing programs and services with accessibility at the forefront is the most effective way organizations and providers can ensure that everyone can actively participate.

Training staff to accommodate diverse needs and provide equitable service delivery results in people with disabilities receiving appropriate personalized assistance, whether delivered in person, over the phone, or online. These combined efforts eliminate barriers and create the best opportunity for people with disabilities to gain the same opportunities as their peers such as employment and community engagement.

For example:

- People who are deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing communicating and interacting with online public programs and services through video relay interpreters and online captioning services can communicate in real time with a service provider.
- People who use wheeled mobility aids or other mobility aids can easily enter accessible buildings and participate in work and civic events without experiencing physical barriers.
- People who are blind or partially sighted can use assistive technology, such as a screen reader, to access and listen to online content from an organization's accessible website.

These scenarios are achieved when programs, services, and service delivery are designed to be accessible, and customer service representatives are trained to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Organizations should adopt a culture of accessibility and inclusion, making it an organizational norm. Below are steps to create barrier-free programs and services.

## **4.2 General recommendations**

### **4.2.1 Align with key *Accessible Canada Act* principles**

Organizations should align their programs and services with the principles of the *Accessible Canada Act*. At a high level, this means a program or service's impact on people with disabilities needs to be considered from the earliest stages of its development and throughout its existence.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by considering how programs or services (provided directly or indirectly through third-party contracts, licenses, or other arrangements) align with the following principles:

- **Dignity for all.** Does the organization's programs or services treat people with disabilities with dignity regardless of their disabilities or relationships with others?
- **Equal opportunity.** Does the program or service provide people with disabilities the opportunity to have access to the same results from the program or service regardless of disability?
- **No additional charges or qualifications.** Are people with disabilities able to participate in or benefit from a program or service, if they qualify, without being confronted by such barriers as being charged extra for accommodations or administering licenses or certifications?
- **The choice to participate.** Is equal opportunity offered to people with and without disabilities to participate in or benefit from the same services, programs, or activities if they qualify for the services or programs, regardless of whether a separate service or program exists?
- **Equal benefit.** Are people with disabilities afforded equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others if those people otherwise qualify for that service?
- **Equal access.** Is barrier-free access offered to full and equal social participation, regardless of a person's disabilities?
- **Choice of accommodation.** Are people provided meaningful options and the freedom of choice, including the freedom to choose whether to accept an accommodation?
- **Achieve the highest level of accessibility.** Are organizations aiming to achieve the highest level of accessibility for people with disabilities when designing and delivering programs and services?

- **Contribution and feedback.** Are people with disabilities included in developing and designing programs, services, and service delivery, including in customer support and advisory and planning committees?

## 4.3 Getting started: examine all elements of programs and services

The goal of accessibility is to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered when organizations design and deliver programs and services to employees and the public, whether they are in-person, by phone, or through an online platform. When programs and services are designed, developed, and delivered with accessibility in mind, everyone benefits. This means that all elements of program and service design and delivery must be examined.

For example, an organization that is planning an event needs to ensure that:

- the venue or facility is physically accessible;
- the content of the program or service is accessible (for example, in alternate formats);
- communications about the program or the service is accessible (for example, a sign language interpreter and captioning are available in-person and in virtual settings);
- marketing communications about the program or service are accessible (for example, websites, social media, or email);
- a plan for accommodating support persons, service dogs and guide dogs is established; and
- the venue is accessible for people with sensory impairments by reducing sounds, smells, and sights.

To meet the needs of people with disabilities when designing, maintaining, and refining programs and services to be accessible organizations should start by:

- Designing programs and services by focusing on the user's perspective. People with disabilities face a myriad of barriers. The organisation is better able to identify and prevent barriers by seeking their input at the earliest stages of planning. They can also reach out to organizations that represent the needs of people with disabilities at throughout the design process.
- Making it easy for users to provide feedback on programs and services and review their feedback regularly. Encourage positive and negative feedback from users across various accessible mediums (for example, paper forms, social media). Establish a regular cadence of organizing and reviewing this feedback. This helps organizations continually improve how they deliver programs and services.
- Helping users understand the customer service journey. Customer service poses unique challenges to everyone and can be magnified for users with disabilities. Make this process more accessible for everyone by letting users know exactly what they must do, how long it will take, and their rights.
- Using and leveraging organizational processes. Having good organizational processes in place (for example, having an accessibility coordinator) makes designing and delivering accessible programs and services much easier.
- Taking advantage of existing standards and best practices. Other organizations have adopted strategies that simplify eliminating barriers. Instead of reinventing the wheel, use these standards and best practices. An accessibility coordinator can help identify these practices.

Additional details of each of these elements are provided in the subsections below.

### **4.3.1 Capture the user's perspective in designing and delivering programs, services and customer service**

People with disabilities often face additional socio-economic barriers that go beyond traditional barriers such as inaccessible buildings and communication. For instance, some people with disabilities may face financial hardship or other barriers due to various intersecting identities. The best way to understand the barriers created by these intersecting challenges is to meet users where they are and involve them early in the planning process.

To meet this guidance, when designing and delivering programs, services, and customer services, organizations should start by:

- contacting organizations representing people with disabilities when designing or modifying programs and services;
- providing compensation to people with disabilities for their time and expertise;
- using various means of outreach when designing engagement activities for the development of programs, services and customer service (for example, in-person community meetings, virtual meetings, surveys);
- considering the different barriers that people with disabilities may face when seeking their feedback and plan to offer accommodations; and
- ensuring that all feedback you solicit is shared with organization leadership to help increase their understanding on the need to increase the accessibility of programs and resources.

## 4.3.2 Understanding the needs of users

It is critical to understand user needs as early as possible in the design and development process of every aspect of programs, services, and customer services is critical.

For example, staff who are tasked with marketing or advertising upcoming programs or services need to consider the potential accessibility challenges of each marketing or advertising channel. Is a direct-to-customer email accessible? Are social media channels accessible to users with disabilities?

Organizations that are new to accessibility may again find that discussing these issues with people with disabilities is the best practice for meeting users' needs.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by considering:

- The need for organizational leadership to receive training or educational materials on the importance of making programs and services accessible and equitable.
- The potential implications of a "one-size-fits-all" approach for the program and service. This may not work and different mediums of delivery (i.e., virtual versus in-person versus over the phone) may require different methods of delivery (for example, how a customer provides information in person may differ than how they provide it through a phone conversation). As a result, a different approach may be required). Sometimes delivery methods require flexible solutions.
- The accessibility of communications for customers with sensory disabilities.
- The impact that a provider's means of delivery may have on users.
- The physical accessibility of venues.

For additional guidance on accessible communication and the physical accessibility of the built environment, consult the following resources:

- [CAN/ASC-2.3-Model Standard for the Built Environment- Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#)
- [CAN/ASC-EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services \(EN 301 549:2021, IDT\)](#)

### **4.3.3 Solicit customer feedback throughout implementation**

Organizations should solicit feedback from people with disabilities throughout the implementation of their program or service. This feedback can be a valuable way to identify and eliminate barriers. This can lead to a more equitable experience for all.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Proactively providing accessible online forms and other means for consumers with disabilities to give feedback (both online and on-premises).
- Soliciting detailed information in ways that prompt customers to make their needs known.
- Following any regulatory requirements for soliciting and incorporating feedback for your particular sector. For example, the *Accessible Canada Act* requires that organizations solicit and incorporate feedback into their accessibility plans.

## 4.3.4 Create a schedule for reviewing feedback

Feedback is not valuable unless it is regularly reviewed to identify patterns and set priorities. If an organization doesn't have a schedule (i.e. annual) for reviewing feedback, accessibility issues can arise that affect the program or service experience for all.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Planning and scheduling reviews ahead of time to minimize disruptions and to be as effective as possible.
- Combining this information with information gleaned from performing self-evaluations (Section [4.4.2](#)) to understand:
  - where there are areas for improvement to meet the requirements of accessibility standards;
  - where other barriers may exist for people with disabilities; and
  - how they can make improvements.
- Following any regulatory requirements for your sector. For example, organizations that must comply with the *Accessible Canada Act* must update their accessibility plans every three years.

## 4.3.5 Special considerations for customer service

Engaging with customer service can be difficult for all customers, particularly for customers with disabilities. Organizations should implement best practices to streamline the process of making customer service more accessible and usable.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Giving customers with disabilities a clear understanding of the process for resolving issues when a customer's needs cannot be immediately resolved. This includes a step-by-step outline the necessary next steps and the name and contact information of a responsible employee etc.
- Including essential information such as the prices and the conditions to cancel or change products or services when information is provided to customers. Such "key information" should be highlighted as clearly as possible and acknowledged by the customer.
- Using accessible systems that are streamlined to ensure they are not distracting or presenting unnecessary information when automated chat and voice response technologies are used to communicate with customers. Organizations should also make it easy for customers to contact them through alternate means (for example, by telephone or whatever accessible communication channel the customer prefers).

### **4.3.6 Take advantage of useful processes and procedures**

Accessibility can seem overwhelming if organizations don't broadly share information, feedback, and best practices. Accessibility practices should benefit the entire organization. Organizations should leverage the best practices outlined in [Section 4.4](#) (Organizational Processes).

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Designating an accessibility coordinator (see [Section 4.4.1](#) for more information) to ensure that one person is responsible for the organization's compliance with accessibility requirements. The accessibility coordinator can bring together all the accessibility best practices so that everyone can easily find them.

- Having a straightforward process for receiving and regularly reviewing customer feedback from users with disabilities to:
  - identify patterns;
  - prioritize where latent accessibility barriers may exist; and
  - correct them.

## 4.4 Organizational processes

Section [4.3](#) focused on making programs and services accessible for people with disabilities. At a broader level, there are essential steps that organizations should take to remove barriers. The processes in this section support the steps outlined for specific programs and services in Section [4.5](#).

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Designating an accessibility coordinator that reports directly to senior management. Organizations should have a “point person” to:
  - coordinate efforts;
  - provide accountability; and
  - be the face of accessibility in the organization.
- Performing a self-evaluation and creating feedback mechanisms. These steps are essential to understanding the barriers that currently exist in organizations and giving people with disabilities a means of helping organizations identify those barriers. These processes also help organizations to set priorities.

- Training team members and using performance goals. Once barriers are understood and priorities are set, organizations have clarity over what training is needed and how performance goals should be set. Implementing focused training and specific performance goals can help to ensure that barriers can be removed, and accessibility can be improved.

Additional details of each of these steps are provided in the subsections below.

### **4.4.1 Designate an accessibility coordinator**

To coordinate efforts across an organization or department and efficiently respond to the needs of people with disabilities, organizations should designate a coordinator that reports directly to senior management to coordinate and implement these efforts (an accessibility coordinator). For instance, if a sign language interpreter is needed to make a document accessible for any user who is deaf, having an accessibility coordinator (or content created by the coordinator) to go to for assistance will eliminate confusion. The accessibility coordinator can also work with consumers with disabilities to address their needs when front-line staff need support resolving an issue.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- appointing an accessibility coordinator to oversee accessible programs and services (including customer service);
- sharing contact information to reach the appointed staff member including their name, office address, and phone number with anyone who requests it;
- providing the accessibility coordinator's contact information on its accessible website where people with disabilities can easily find it;
- recording actions, policies, and practices for coordinating and achieving accessibility; and

- making this information accessible and freely available to employees and the public within physical venues, on websites, and through other avenues of communication such as social media.

For example, many organizations create a page on their website that contains:

- their commitment to accessibility;
- links to their policies and practices; and a way to contact the organization for specialized help with accessibility matters.

Best practices for developing a Customer Service policy or incorporating accessibility into a Customer Service policy can be found in the links below:

- [CAN/ASC-5.2.1-Part 1-Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery–Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the \*Accessible Canada Act\*](#)
- [Government of Canada Guideline on Service and Digital](#)

## 4.4.2 Perform a self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is an essential element of continuous improvement and removing barriers.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Reviewing their programs, services, policies, and practices within a year of adopting new policies, procedures or practices. This allows for remediation, incorporation of consumer feedback, and continual improvement. This review should be repeated at least every three years.
- Encouraging interested people, including people with disabilities or groups representing them, to join the self-evaluation process and provide their opinions.

- Asking frontline staff how well the systems, processes, and procedures work to help them find and assist customers with disabilities including those who face multiple barriers.

### **4.4.3 Use feedback for continual improvement**

People with disabilities may have questions, suggestions, and complaints. Organizations should take this input seriously.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- developing a robust grievance process;
- communicating the grievance process and how to initiate it;
- developing informal feedback process and mechanisms and informing consumers of these feedback processes and mechanisms; and
- leveraging the wealth of information that customers provide.

This allows people with disabilities or people acting on their behalf to make the organization aware of accessibility barriers. The organization can then respond promptly. Complaints highlight areas where improvements are needed and provide valuable insights into consumer experiences.

Organizations should always advise people of their right to file an accessibility complaint with the appropriate body, such as the Accessibility Commissioner or the Human Rights Commission. This is important for maintaining transparency and fairness to consumers.

Informal, "every day" mechanisms such as a specific online portal or an accessibility answer desk can resolve consumer issues and service complaints faster. These mechanisms are generally less disruptive for the customer than filing formal complaints. Organizations should always record consumer feedback and evaluate it regularly to identify barriers that need removal.

Organizations can continually improve the accessibility and inclusivity of programs and services by regularly reviewing customer complaints, feedback, and learning from staff experiences. They can use this information to develop creative and innovative solutions that will prevent future barriers and create positive customer outcomes. These reviews are also an excellent opportunity to incorporate new accessibility best practices as they are identified.

Further guidance on complaint processes:

- [Canadian Human Rights Commission complaint process](#)

#### 4.4.4 Create a culture of accessibility

Stigmatization and discrimination deny people with disabilities their dignity and potential and are two of the most significant obstacles in achieving equal opportunity and social integration. The *Accessible Canada Act* focuses on building accessibility confidence and creating a culture of accessibility within federally regulated entities. Below are strategies organizations may consider:

- Developing and delivering accessibility and disability awareness training for all employees. An initial target metric could focus on achieving 80% or more of the employees completing the training, with a stretch goal of achieving 100% of employees. Organizations should also update training on a yearly basis to reflect new standards, policies, programs, and practices.
- Creating a disability or accessibility employment resource group. This group can promote and sponsor accessibility initiatives throughout an organization. This group can work closely with the Accessibility Coordinator outlined in Section [4.4](#).

- Promoting cultural change by having panel discussions with representatives of various disability groups. These representatives could speak about their lived experiences and all employees could attend. While culture change usually happens through very small continual steps, it can be accelerated when staff members have an "aha moment" by:
  - putting a human face to an abstract need;
  - hearing directly from customers about their experience; and
  - learning how small accessibility changes can have an impact on customers with disabilities' ability to better access the organization's programs or services.
- Following the guidance of clause 11 of [CAN/ASC-1.1:2024\(REV-2025\)-Employment](#) on culture, engagement, and education.

## 4.4.5 Train team members

People with disabilities deserve the same courtesy and respect as any customer. Training team members to meet the needs of customers with disabilities is a critical element of customer service for program and service design and delivery. Proper training ensures that organizations are respectful, informed, and responsive to the diverse needs of all customers, including people with disabilities. Organizations should create a policy that specifies how this training will be developed and provided.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by including the following modules in their training:

- disability etiquette and awareness;
- equitable communication;
- interaction with service or guide dogs and support persons;
- specialized equipment and making accommodations;
- problem-solving complex issues; and

- determining when to call on a higher level of service or management for assistance.

For example, people with disabilities have preferences regarding the language used to describe their disabilities. Some prefer the “people first” language (person who is blind), and others prefer their disability be used first (blind person). There are common courtesies for communicating with people who are deaf and their interpreters, such as keeping focus on the person who is deaf instead of the interpreter. It is not appropriate to touch a person's service or guide dog or white cane without asking permission. It is customary to ask permission before assisting people with disabilities, such as opening a door or guiding someone to a specific location.

The training should:

- be inclusive of everyone in the organization, including volunteers and contractors;
- cover the organization's policies, programs, services, and goods;
- be refreshed and offered yearly when a program or service is updated, or a new program or service is launched; and
- keep a record of who was trained and when to ensure everyone is updated on training.

A best practice implemented by many public and private organizations is to develop and deliver an annual accessibility etiquette and awareness training for all employees. An initial target metric could focus on achieving 80% or more of the employees completing the training, with a stretch goal of achieving 100% of the employees. Organizations should update this yearly training to reflect new standards, policies, programs, and practices.

Best practices for training organizations on serving people with disabilities include the following guides:

- [Government of Canada centre of expertise for accessible client service](#)

- [AccessAbility playbook: delivering accessible client service](#)

## 4.4.6 Goals and monitor performance

Setting goals to remove barriers and monitoring their effectiveness is essential to updating accessibility plans (as required by the *Accessible Canada Act*) and making future recommendations. This is especially important once an organization has published clear policies and procedures for accessibility. Critical aspects of customer service delivery should be evaluated for accessibility regularly, such as:

- in-person, phone, and online delivery channels;
- the built environment; and
- any other tools, documents, or facilities used to deliver elements of programs or services, including funding or grants.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by including findings and recommendations from:

- the feedback process for their *Accessible Canada Act* accessibility plan;
- their progress reports;
- their feedback processes; and
- their self-evaluation.

## 4.4.7 Additional organizational processes

Organizations can also do the following to remove barriers and improve accessibility for their customers with disabilities:

- Involve people with disabilities in deciding how best to design and deliver programs and services. As discussed more thoroughly in Section [4.3](#), organizations should develop trusted partnerships with organizations representing users with disabilities to align with the principle of “Nothing without us.”
- Include clauses about accessibility of products and services in the Terms and Conditions and other procurement documentation. These documents can include an organization’s procurement policy or an accessibility conformance report from vendors and contractors in technology and other goods and services proposals. Include training to re-enforce the importance of these documents being accessible.
- Include accessibility in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) planning and testing. Developing an information and communication technology plan that includes accessibility ensures that an organization’s plans for its digital infrastructure embraces accessibility and interoperability with assistive technology used by people with disabilities. Create an accessibility testing policy and train testers on assessing and remediating products and services throughout their lifecycles.
- Treat accessibility as a business need. Include accessibility with other organizational programs and service audits (for example, privacy and security) so that it is provided with organizational resources and treated like a valuable part of the organization.
- Take accessibility concerns seriously. Develop forward-looking, time-based strategies for resolving issues users have identified as barriers and make this information available to users as progress is made.

## 4.5 Specific obligations

People with disabilities have and continue to face many types of barriers. Many have and are working to help organizations understand the need to eliminate longstanding barriers and create solutions that meet the needs of everyone. It is essential for specific programs and services (Section [4.3](#)) and for organizations at a broader level (Section [4.4](#)) to understand how to avoid repeating the creation of barriers and to be aware of common solutions.

The topics covered here form a checklist of the actions organizations should take when designing, implementing, and reviewing the delivery of programs and services.

### 4.5.1 Accompaniment by service and guide dogs

Service and guide dogs often accompany people with disabilities and assist with essential tasks like navigation, retrieving objects, or ensuring safety. A service or guide dog is a dog individually trained to work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. It does not include pets or dogs that otherwise provide emotional support. When a service or guide dog accompanies a person with a disability, organizations should ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the dog and keep it with them when they are on the premises.

In many cases, it will be evident that the dog is trained to help a person with a disability (for example, the dog is seen helping a person who is blind navigate, pushing a person's wheelchair, or supporting someone who has difficulty moving). In some cases, however, the service or guide dog may support a person's invisible disabilities (for example, a seizure alert dog), and these inquiries may be warranted.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Observing before acting:
  - Does the dog have a harness, vest or I.D. tag?
  - Is the dog behaving appropriately (i.e., quiet, under control, not approaching others)?

If the answer is yes to both, do not question the person with a disability and allow them full access as required by law.

A person with a disability and their service or guide dog may be refused access to the premises if:

- the dog is not behaving, and the person does not stop it from misbehaving;
- the dog is not trained to relieve itself only in designated areas; or
- the dog would be dangerous to its person or others (for example, if a service dog or guide dog is not responding to the commands of its handler and is aggressive towards other customers).

If the dog is not visibly marked with a harness, vest or I.D. tag as a service or guide dog, and the customer service representative is uncertain they may ask the following two questions:

- Does the person need the dog because of a disability?
- What tasks is the dog trained to perform?

Even if a service or guide dog is excluded, organizations should never exclude a person with a disability. In that case, organizations should have alternative ways to help people get, use, or enjoy programs and services.

Do not charge extra fees or impose additional rules on people with disabilities accompanied by service or guide dogs, even if those same fees or rules are applied to people accompanied by their pets. If organizations usually ask people to pay for damage their pet caused, they can request a person with a disability to pay for damage caused by their service or guide dog.

If customers are asked to wait more than 30 minutes, organizations should have dedicated places for service or guide dogs to go to the bathroom. Information on relief areas should be made public on an organization's website, in the service areas of the venue, or given by onsite staff. These relief areas should follow an accessible path and should be easy to locate through proper signage and identification.

For further information on specifications for service and guide dog relief areas and the built environment, see:

- [CAN/ASC-2.1-Outdoor Spaces](#), specifically clause 7.5 on service animal relief areas, and
- [CAN/ASC-2.3-Model Standard for the Built Environment - Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act for additional information on the built environment](#).

Relief areas should be in a location that conforms to guidance found in [CAN/ASC-2.1-Outdoor Spaces](#) clause 7.5.1. They should be posted online through the organization's website, onsite in the service areas of the venue, and should be communicated through onsite staff.

The way to relief areas should follow an accessible path in a location that meets the built environment and wayfinding and signage accessibility standards below. Directions to relief areas should be easy to find online through the organization's website, and onsite in the service areas of the venue, and it should be communicated through onsite staff.

Further information on accessible built environments and related topics:

- [CAN/ASC-2.3-Model Standard for the Built Environment - Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined in the Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [CAN/ASC-2.1-Outdoor Spaces](#)

## **4.5.2 Accompaniment by support persons**

People with disabilities may require a support person accompany them when accessing programs and services. For example, to navigate physical barriers, for communication assistance, for emotional support, for help with tasks, and safety and security. In other instances, organizations may require the presence of a support person to ensure the safety of the people with a disability. This section provides guidance for including support persons.

A person with a disability and their support person should enter the program, service venue, or facility together and stay with each other throughout the program or service venue. A person with a disability can be asked to have a support person with them on the premises only if the statements below are true:

- the support person is needed to keep the person with a disability or people around them healthy or safe; and
- there is no other reasonable way to keep the person with a disability or people around them healthy or safe.

Organizations cannot charge admission fees for the support person if either of the below is true:

- the provider says a person with a disability needs a support person on the premises; or
- the person with a disability needs a support person to use the premises or the services.

Organizations should provide notice beforehand regarding how much must be paid (if anything) for other support people who don't meet either of the above criteria.

People with disabilities may find their privacy compromised when receiving assistance in the presence of a support person. Organizations should have strong policies to protect against disclosing private information in front of support persons.

To meet this guidance, staff should start by telling the person with a disability:

- that their support person might see their private or secret information;
- what could happen to that information, and if it could be exposed elsewhere (for example, when signing in on a personal computer); and
- to ask the person if they agree to let their support person see their private or secret information.

Organizations should provide maximum autonomy to people with disabilities while respecting their privacy and security rights. In delivering programs and services, it is crucial to prioritize protecting the privacy, security, and data of users with disabilities providing training to staff and taking precautions with their technologies. To the maximum extent feasible, ensure that contractors and third parties (including support persons) understand and adhere to the same privacy and data-safeguarding requirements as the organization and its staff.

People with disabilities should also have the right to consent when it has to do with sharing and using their private information. To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- providing people with disabilities with accessible mechanisms to support informed consent;

- allowing a person using supported decision-making to select trusted advisors, such as friends, family members, or professionals, to serve as supporters when giving consent;
- providing information in a nontechnical, plain language form to clarify the decision's potential impact; and
- making it possible to withdraw consent at any time without any negative consequence.

Organizations should provide documents clearly explaining their policies in plain language following the [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) standard. This information should be provided in visible areas on the organization's premises, website, and anywhere else where a service or program is offered. Organizations should be prepared to provide information in alternate formats, such as large print or electronic, if requested.

Please also see Section [4.5.9](#) (Use Effective Written and Electronic Communication).

Further Information on communicating in Plain Language:

- [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#)

### **4.5.3 Built environment, wayfinding and signage**

Accessible in-person delivery of programs, services, and customer service requires the venue where people with disabilities receive services and participate in programs to be accessible and easy to navigate. This includes the building structure, the pathways to and inside the building, and the facilities, such as elevators, offices, bathrooms, mail and copy rooms, and self-service kiosks.

Suppose a service or program is being delivered in an outdoor area. In that case, program and service designers and deliverers should ensure that the area, the pathways to and from it, and any structures on it are accessible, such as bathrooms, picnic tables, playground structures.

Wayfinding, the practice of making sure people can experience and find their way within a physical space and to and from that space, and signage are particularly important for people with disabilities. For example, a person who is blind may rely on tactile walking surface indicators, tactile labels on doors or elevator buttons, or audible cues to orient themselves and navigate the space around them. At the same time, a person who is deaf may rely on signage and lighting to find their way. People who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids need their paths of travel (inside and outside of buildings) to be clearly marked and free of obstructions.

Accessible signage and wayfinding are important because they ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can navigate spaces effectively, independently, and safely. Signage and wayfinding that are accessible are not just functional but essential elements of inclusive design, ensuring that everyone can use and enjoy a space equally, efficiently, and safely.

Further information about wayfinding and signage:

- [CSA/ASC B651:23 - Accessible design for the built environment.](#)

#### **4.5.4 Maintain accessible features**

A well-maintained, accessible environment promotes equal opportunities. People with disabilities rely on facilities, programs, and services to be accessible and well maintained. Accessibility features, no matter how advanced they are, become useless if they are not functional. When buildings have ramps, elevators, wide doorways, automatic door actuators (openers), and accessible restrooms, people can move freely without relying on others for assistance. These accessible spaces ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in various activities, whether attending events, accessing a service or participating in a program.

Organizations should ensure that their accessible elements and features are properly maintained and in good working condition. This ensures people with disabilities can use these components at any time. Additionally, organizations should avoid creating new barriers that could obstruct accessibility features. For example, avoid temporarily blocking ramps or aisles with boxes or garbage containers.

Facilities do break down, and sometimes accessibility features are not available. If there is a problem with the features needed to make programs, products, services, or facilities accessible to people with disabilities, organizations should inform people of the problem using plain language and accessible formats through multiple channels such as:

- a program's website;
- social media; or
- directly through individual outreach.

Such notifications should describe why there is a problem (what happened), how long it will last, and it should describe the available accessible alternatives.

Please also see Section [4.5.3](#) (Built Environment, Wayfinding and Signage) and Section [4.5.8](#) (Use Effective Written and Electronic Communication).

## **4.5.5 The use of assistive devices including mobility aids**

Assistive devices (including mobility aids and other personal assistance devices) enhance quality of life, promote inclusion, and enable independence for people with disabilities. Assistive devices range from physical items like hearing aids to digital solutions like speech recognition software and screen readers, to augmentative communication systems. These devices provide direct support to people with disabilities. Additional examples include mobility aids, cognitive aids, and vision aids.

People with disabilities may use wheelchairs and other mobility aids (for example, manually powered mobility aids, such as walkers, crutches, canes, braces, or similar mobility aids) to help them move around in places.

Always allow people with disabilities to use their assistive devices including mobility aids. Do not touch or adjust people's assistive devices. People with disabilities often consider these devices as extensions of themselves.

## 4.5.6 Make communication accessible

Making communication accessible for people with disabilities promotes inclusion and ensures that the needs, perspectives, and voices of people with disabilities are acknowledged and understood. Organizations should ensure that communication with people with disabilities (as applicants, participants, the public, and companions) is as accessible as communication with others, whether by phone, telephone, in person, or online.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by using:

- Accommodations (sign language interpreter, video remote interpreter, accessible documents, etc.).
- Plain language in all communications with the public in accordance with the [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) to ensure organizations communicate information regarding programs and services understandably.
- Accessible technology and digital content (documents and websites) where programs or services are provided through information technology.

An auxiliary aid is any device or service that enables effective communication for people with disabilities. These aids and services accommodate various needs, including hearing, seeing, speaking, reading, writing, remembering, or understanding. Examples of auxiliary aids include:

- **Qualified interpreters:** for sign language or spoken language interpretation.
- **Notetakers:** assist in capturing information during meetings or classes.
- **Screen readers:** software that reads text aloud for visually impaired people.
- **Computer-Aided Real-Time Transcription (CART):** provides real-time text transcription.
- **Written materials:** large print, braille, or electronic formats.
- **Telephone handset amplifiers:** Enhance sound for those with hearing loss.
- **Assistive Listening Devices (ALD):** improve hearing in noisy environments.
- **Video Interpreting Services (VIS):** remote sign language interpretation via video.
- **Teletypewriter (TTYs):** allow text-based communication over phone lines.
- **Closed Captioning (CC):** provides text for video content.
- **Email and text messaging:** Written communication options.
- **Taped texts and audio recordings:** Accessible formats for reading materials.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems include aided and unaided ways of communicating with people who communicate best through gestures, fingerspelling, drawings, pictures and communication boards, and devices that generate speech. One common system is a Picture Exchange Communication System that allows people with little or no communication abilities to communicate using pictures.

Organizations should provide auxiliary aids and services (including sign language interpreters) when requested and where needed to ensure people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate and enjoy the benefits of the organization's programs and services. It is preferable to ask people with disabilities what would provide them with the best accommodation. Auxiliary aids and services are most effective when promoting independence.

Provide and deliver information in accessible formats promptly and with privacy protections. When possible, provide people with disabilities with the opportunity to request an auxiliary aid or service before attending an event, accessing a service or participating in a program in person or remotely. Organizations should include information about how to request auxiliary aids and services on their program and services websites and in registration materials. In doing so, people with disabilities can provide the necessary information for organizations to plan for and provide the requested services in a timely manner.

If a person with a disability requires an interpreter, they should not be expected to bring their own except:

- in emergencies and an interpreter is not available; or
- when the person with a disability requests it, the support person or interpreter agrees to provide the service. A minor is not recommended to be asked to interpret except in emergencies where no other interpreter is available.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) enhances communication access for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. VRI allows on-demand remote access to qualified sign language interpreters. Deaf people can communicate effectively in real-time, whether at work, medical appointments, or other situations. In areas with limited in-person interpreters, VRI bridges the gap.

Video quality is essential for clear communication. If an organization chooses to provide qualified interpreters via VRI services, the organization should test the service to ensure it allows for the following:

- Fast and precise video and sound that can be projected over a suitable connection that displays smooth, sharp images without delays or other problems.
- Large image that clearly displays the interpreter (face, fingers, hands) and the person with disability they are helping, no matter how they are positioned (i.e., sitting or standing).
- Loud and clear sound of voices that are clearly heard.
- Sufficient training for the people who use and run the VRI services.

TTY devices can play a role in bridging communication gaps for many people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments. TTYs allow text-based conversations instead of spoken language. Users type messages, which are transmitted over the phone line. This enables direct communication with others. Organizations could use TTYs and should consider other equally effective telephone systems, such as TTY relay systems, to communicate with people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments. Accessible automated attendant voice mail or messaging systems can offer significant benefits to people with disabilities. Features like speech recognition, text-to-speech, customization and control, and time independence features allow people with disabilities to interact with automated attendant systems in a way that accommodates their communication preferences. Organizations that use an automated or computerized attendant system (including voice mail, messaging, or other interactive voice response systems) that answers and directs calls should test the system to ensure it offers accessibility features and works well with TTYs and other auxiliary aids. Organizations should also ensure that telephone emergency services provide direct access to people who use TTYs and computer modems.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) ensures effective communication for people who are deaf and people with hearing and speech disabilities. When initiating a TRS call, the caller dials an assigned number that connects to a communications assistant (CA). The CA acts as an intermediary, relaying messages between the caller and the recipient based on each person's preferred form of communication. Privacy is maintained because of confidentiality requirements for the CA. TRS is available nationwide for local calls. TRS bridges communication gaps, allowing everyone to connect using standard voice telephones. Organizations should respond to telephone calls from all telecommunications relay services supervised by the Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission in the same manner that they respond to other telephone calls.

Further information on message relay services:

- [Government of Canada Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Message Relay Services](#)

## **4.5.7 Leverage virtual communication for service delivery and customer service**

Virtual services play a crucial role in enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. They remove barriers, allowing people to participate in services without travelling physically. For example, a person who has a chronic illness may find it difficult to travel, or someone who has mental health issues may find it overwhelming to be in public spaces. Providing services virtually can enable people to easily access services in a way that makes the best sense for them. Offering virtual services foster inclusion, independence, safety, and economic empowerment for people with disabilities.

“Virtual support” is the provision of service and support by the organization to a customer through equipment capable of live, two-way communication. This can include telephone and online technology and software. For example:

- email;
- video conferencing;
- text or voice messaging; and
- virtual reality.

Regarding virtual support:

Organizations should have trained staff who can easily use the accessibility features of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver programs, services, and support. Staff should know how to operate commonly used assistive technology with such ICT to provide virtual services if needed. For example, if a person who is deaf requests a video conferencing session that video conferencing service should offer live captions and transcription services.

When communicating with people with disabilities, organizations should:

- Provide interpreter services and communication aids to people with disabilities and their companions free of charge (people with disabilities are not required to provide their interpreters). Be sure to ask people about their preferences.
- Rely on a companion interpreter (for example, a friend or family member of the person with a disability) only if:
  - there’s an imminent threat or emergency and a qualified interpreter is unavailable; or
  - a person with a disability request to use an adult friend or family member as an interpreter.

- Use an accessible virtual, or online platform that best meets the following:
  - the ability to include an interpreter on the same call as the individual and the organization;
  - live captions;
  - audio description;
  - a high-contrast display; and
  - automatic transcription.
- When scheduling a meeting, send materials and assess accessibility and technology needs before the meeting, including doing the following:
  - include a way for people with disabilities to note any accommodations when scheduling the meeting; and
  - contact the person with a disability before the meeting to work around possible technological challenges and ensure they feel comfortable with the platform.
- Provide closed captioning for all prerecorded customer video resources.
- Use TRS as an alternative to video meetings.
- Offer video conferencing to connect to an interpreter via virtual meeting for real-time sign language or oral interpretation.
- Make resources available in different formats, including printed information, audio recordings, or braille.

Further guidance on providing accessible meetings and virtual communication:

- [Employment and Social Development Canada guide to planning accessible meetings](#)

## 4.5.8 Use effective written and electronic communication

Clear and effective communication ensures that the needs, perspectives, and voices of people with disabilities are acknowledged and understood. Effective communication also builds trust and rapport and helps organizations identify the specific support needs of people with disabilities.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by adhering to the following guidelines:

- **Timely communication:** Ensure that communications consider the person's accessibility needs and are delivered promptly.
- **No additional cost:** When providing documents, charge no more than what is charged to other people.
- **Privacy and independence:** Protect the privacy and independence of the person with a disability if communication support is offered.
- **Accessible electronic documents:** Base online services or programs and electronic documents (such as forms) on an accessible platform that enables users to complete tasks effectively.

People have diverse needs. People who are blind may require formats such as braille, whereas individuals who are partially sighted may require large print, and people with cognitive disabilities may require audio formats. Offering a variety of accessible formats addresses diverse needs ensures that people with disabilities can access the same content as others. To meet diverse needs, organizations should ensure that materials are available in a variety of formats so that they are accessible to a wide range of people with disabilities.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by providing various formats. The following excerpt from Employment and Social Development Canada's Guidance on the *Accessible Canada Act: Alternate Formats* describe the types of alternate formats that federally regulated entities must make available upon request:

- **Print:** Printed or electronic text.
- **Large print:** printed or electronic text with a larger font size and good colour contrast. The smallest font size should be between 16 and 20 points.
- **Braille:** A system of cells and dots that represent characters and numbers. Braille can be in electronic or physical format. Readers use their fingertips to read raised dots on paper. Some electronic devices can read Braille in electronic format as well. Find more information about Braille on the CNIB Foundation website.
- **Audio format:** An audio recording or data file (such as a DAISY file).
- **Electronic format:** A text format, document, image, or file in a digital format compatible with adaptive technology intended to assist people with disabilities. Users navigate documents by moving between pages, sections, chapters, and tables of contents.

Organizations should also ensure that accessible web-based documents or other electronic documents provided in HTML conform to section 9 of [CAN/ASC-EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services \(EN 301 549:2021, IDT\)](#). Accessible versions of all other electronic documents should conform to section 10 of [CAN/ASC-EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services \(EN 301 549:2021, IDT\)](#).

Consult with the person requesting the information (where possible) to determine the most suitable accessible format or communication support. This approach ensures that communication is tailored to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities. Be prepared to provide both a physical and an electronic version of every document.

Further information on effective written and electronic communication:

- [Employment and Social Development Canada's guidance on the Accessible Canada Act: alternate formats](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Toolkit create accessible documents](#)

## 4.5.9 Plan for emergencies

Effective service delivery during emergencies is vital to public health and safety. People with disabilities can face significant barriers when accessing emergency services. Organizations should ensure their services are accessible during emergencies.

To meet this guidance, organizations should start by:

- Ensuring they are delivering accessible services during and after (short- and long-term) emergencies.
- Preparing for emergencies. Specifically:
  - removing all accessibility barriers in advance;
  - maintaining accessibility features during emergencies;
  - developing an accessible built environment; and
  - creating an accessible emergency egress.
- Adopting changes that keep everyone safe and ensuring all staff members are safe during an emergency.

Emergency egress guidance addresses the types of buildings that are advised to have an accessible travel path. It provides a process for planning, practising, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of emergency plans. All organizations delivering service and customer service in buildings should implement accessible travel paths.

Accessible emergency measures for people with disabilities should be considered by organizations that deliver programs, services and customer service. They should cover the following topics:

- General considerations for emergency planning and incident management.
- General considerations for vulnerable populations in emergencies.
- Pre-incident emergency planning and emergency plans.
- Hazard identification, risk assessment, prevention, and mitigation.
- Post-incident recovery.
- Public warning systems.
- Public information and communication.

Further guidance on emergency measures:

- [Accessible service delivery during emergencies, including COVID-19](#)

# 5 Links to other accessibility standards

- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** (2024, May). CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 - Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services (EN 301 549:2021, IDT). <https://accessible.canada.ca/en-301-549-accessibility-requirements-ict-products-and-services>
- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** (2024, December). CAN/ASC-1.1:2024(REV-2025)-Employment. <https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/can-asc-112024-rev-2025-employment>
- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** CAN/ASC-5.2.1-Part 1-Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery—Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the *Accessible Canada Act*. <https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/can-asc-521-design-and-delivery-accessible-programs-and-services>
- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** CAN/ASC-2.3-Model Standard for the Built Environment-Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the Accessible Canada Act. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/built-environment/can-asc-23-standard-built-environment>
- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language. <https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/public-reviews/can-asc-3-1>
- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** CAN/ASC-2.1-Outdoor Spaces, <https://accessible.canada.ca/can-asc-2-1>
- **CSA Group and Accessibility Standards Canada.** (2023). CSA/ASC B651:23 - Accessible design for the built environment. <https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/CSA-ASC%20B651%3A23/>

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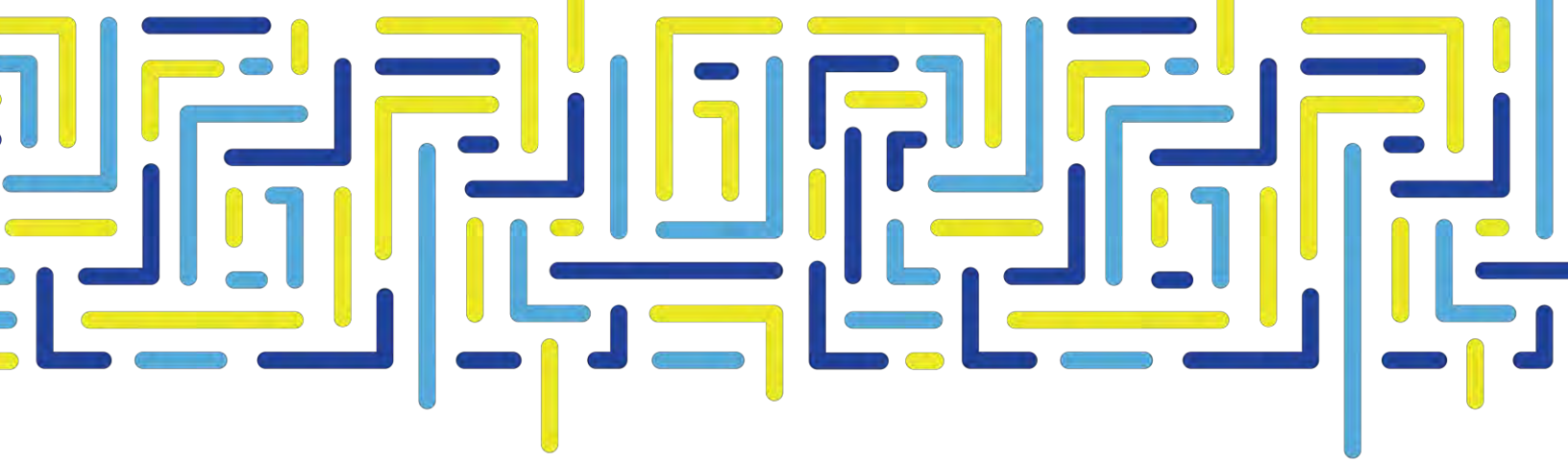
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# Procurement of accessible goods

August 26, 2025

## Technical guide



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## 2 About this technical guide

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This is a jointly developed technical guide between Accessibility Standards Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Accessibility Standards Canada develops equity-based accessibility standards and guidance. Accessibility Standards Canada seeks to create inclusive standards that can impact all persons with disabilities while recognizing their intersectionality and expertise. Accessibility Standards Canada is sharing this technical guide so that organizations can begin implementing this guidance in their work while a standard in this area is being developed. This technical guide focuses on areas where people with disabilities face barriers in the procurement and the goods acquired through procurement. Equity refers to fairness, justice, and freedom from discrimination. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and focuses on enabling all individuals to achieve the same outcomes.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) supports federal departments and agencies in their daily operations as their central purchasing agent, real property manager, treasurer, accountant, pay and pension administrator, integrity advisor, common service provider and linguistic authority. Procurement is an important area where PSPC supports the Government of Canada's priority of a barrier-free society.

The Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) within PSPC was established to help federal government buyers understand how to consider and integrate accessibility requirements when procuring goods and services. The Centre promotes awareness about the value of accessible goods and services as an important step to enhance inclusion for people of all abilities. The Centre is also a resource hub for federal government departments to support the purchase of accessible goods and services.

## **2.1 Audience**

This technical guide is intended for all Government of Canada departments, agencies, and federally regulated entities, as well as anyone seeking guidance to improve accessibility in this area.

## 3 Context

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

### 3.1 General

Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides that align with its vision. This vision is rooted in the principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us.” These principles reflect a commitment to breaking down barriers to accessibility that can impact all persons in Canada—especially persons with disabilities and their families—ensuring full and equal participation in society.

As part of the “nothing without us” principle, Accessibility Standards Canada promotes that accessibility is good for everyone, as it can have society-wide benefits. As a result, Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides to promote accessibility and accessible best practices. This means that this technical guide incorporates best practices, the lived experience of people with disabilities, and information aimed at achieving the highest level of accessibility. This approach is meant to drive innovation, foster change, and promote requirements and best practices that have broad positive impacts.

This approach strives to improve outcomes for all Canadians, including creating employment opportunities and solutions that contribute to Canada’s economic growth.

By proactively removing barriers, these guides' support the key accessibility principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us,” support organizations on their accessibility journeys, and move Canada closer to being barrier-free by 2040. The technical content of this guide benefits:

- people with disabilities;
- people without disabilities;
- the federal public sector;
- the private sector;
- non-government organizations;
- Indigenous communities; and
- society.

The guidance provided in sections 4 through 5, support the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

## 3.2 Accessible Canada Act

The *Accessible Canada Act* provides a framework which allows for the proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers wherever Canadians interact with areas under federal jurisdiction. It puts in place mechanisms that would systematically address accessibility. The purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in the following priority areas:

- employment;
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces);
- 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; and
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

## **3.3 Accessible Canada Act consultations**

To inform the development of the *Accessible Canada Act*, in 2016 to 2017 the Government of Canada undertook the largest and most accessible consultation on disability issues that Canada has ever seen. Over 6000 Canadians and over 90 organizations shared their ideas about an accessible Canada. Participants wanted the legislation to apply to all areas under the control of the Government of Canada and that Canada should become a leader in accessibility. While participants acknowledged that the development and implementation of some standards will take longer than others, they noted guidance should be clear and any accessibility requirements should lead to positive lasting change.

The “nothing without us” principle means that people with disabilities are engaged and involved in the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers. This also means consulting and working closely with people with disabilities, diverse disability communities and other experts to develop accessibility guidance to remove barriers. The principle of “nothing without us” drives everything we do at Accessibility Standards Canada, including relying on the knowledge and experiences of people with disabilities in the development of accessibility guidance.

## 3.4 Key Accessible Canada Act principles

The *Act* is to be implemented in recognition of, and in accordance with, the following principles:

- everyone must be treated with dignity;
- everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able and wish to have;
- everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society;
- everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire;
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kinds of barriers and discrimination intersect;
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility.

## 3.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. The United Nations Convention protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination, and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has served as the major catalyst in the global movement towards viewing persons with disabilities as full and equal members of society. The human rights approach has moved away from viewing persons with disabilities as subjects of charity, medical treatment and social protection. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* were foundational human rights frameworks that support equity on which the *Accessible Canada Act* was built.

# 4 Introduction

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

Whether you are a business owner (such as a client department, agency, or technical authority) or a procurement lead within an organization, this guide is intended to help you understand how to consider accessibility when defining the specifications for the procurement a good.

## 4.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this guide, the following definitions apply:

**End user** - The final user who will use the procured good. End users can include any of the following user groups:

- People with disabilities.
- Members of the public.
- Employees.
- Businesses and private sector entities.

**Goods contract** - A contract for the purchase of articles, commodities, equipment, goods, materials or supplies and includes a contract for the construction or repair of a vessel. Goods contracts may also include related deliverables that support the use of the good. These are referred to as “indirect deliverables.”

**Direct deliverables** - The products that are purchased, rented, or otherwise acquired by a business and that end users interact with or use directly. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Furniture and fixtures.
- Equipment and tools.
- Electronics and technology.
- Communication materials.
- Vehicles and mobility devices.
- Software licenses and digital content packages.

**Example:** A self-service touchscreen kiosk purchased for a customer service area.

**Indirect deliverables** - the supporting materials or services that accompany or relate to the direct deliverable which may or may not be used directly by the end user.

**Example:** instructional materials (e.g., manuals), support software, warranties, support services (e.g. training, customer service), setup services and packaging.

**Note:** This guide uses the terms **direct** and **indirect deliverables** to distinguish between these components when applying accessibility requirements. Accessibility considerations apply to both. For example, even if the direct deliverable cannot be made accessible and comply with required standards, accompanying indirect deliverables must still be designed to avoid barriers.

## 4.2 Roles and responsibilities

The **Business owner** is typically the project lead, program authority, or requestor of the good within an organization. They are responsible for defining the intended outcomes of the procurement, including the operational requirements and for identifying how accessibility should be integrated. The Business Owner is also responsible for providing a clear and written explanation when accessibility requirements are not included in the specifications for a procurement.

The **Procurement lead**, often referred to as the contracting authority, procurement officer, or buyer within an organization, is responsible for overseeing the procurement process. They are often responsible for preparing solicitation documents, ensuring compliance with legal and policy requirements, coordinating the evaluation process, and managing the contract. The Procurement Lead also ensures that the Business Owner considers accessibility and provides a written explanation when accessibility requirements are excluded from the specifications for the procurement.

## 4.3 Consultation and inclusivity

Where feasible, organizations are encouraged to consult with end users, including people with disabilities, to inform the identification of accessibility requirements. These consultations can help ensure that the direct and indirect deliverables are usable and inclusive. However, it is recognized that consulting end users for every individual procurement is not always practical or required.

As well, organizations should aim to engage people with disabilities when developing standards or commodity guidance and templates for commonly purchased goods, ensuring that accessibility needs are meaningfully considered in advance.

## 4.4 Note on language

Throughout this guide, “you” refers to the individual or team responsible for the activities described in each step. These responsibilities may vary across organizations but generally align with the roles defined above. In smaller organizations, one person may fulfill multiple roles, and accessibility responsibilities may be assigned based on internal capacity or external support.

## 4.5 Step 1: Define your requirements

The first step is to understand the intended outcomes of the procurement and the operational requirements the good must meet, as well as the expected deliverables outlined in the contract. Developing a clear Statement of Work (SOW) or Statement of Requirements (SOR) will help you to consider:

- How end users are expected to interact with the good.
- What barriers they might experience when doing so.

### 4.5.1 Objective

The objective of step 1 is to identify the specifications for the procurement of the good. This includes not only the core functions of the good itself, but also the indirect deliverables, such as support services or instructional materials.

### 4.5.2 Questions to ask yourself to help identify accessibility requirements

The following questions are designed to help identify relevant accessibility requirements to include in the SOW or SOR. The following list of questions is not exhaustive and will vary depending on the good you are procuring.

### 4.5.2.1 Purpose of the good

- What is the purpose of the good required? For example:
  - Is it a physical product? (e.g., equipment, furniture, devices)
  - Is it a digital product? (e.g., software, website, app)
- Will the good require information materials? (e.g., instruction manuals, reports, signage)
- Will the good require supporting services? (e.g., installation, maintenance, training)

### 4.5.2.2 End users

- Who will use or interact with the good, now and in the future?
  - External users, such as:
    - Members of the public, including people with disabilities.
    - Public sector employees (federal, provincial, municipal), including employees with disabilities.
    - Non-profit organizations.
    - Businesses and private sector entities.
  - Internal users within your organization.
- Do the end users include people with disabilities?

**Note:** These considerations may overlap with step 2, which focuses on identifying barriers. However, considering a broad range of end users early in the process helps ensure barriers are fully assessed in the next step.

### 4.5.2.3 Documentation, labelling, and packaging

- Will the good be delivered with written material?
  - If so, how will the material be presented? Some examples include:
    - Formats: Braille, large print, high-contrast text, plain language.
    - Digital accessibility: Screen reader compatibility, text-to-speech tools, structured headings.
    - Labelling and packaging: Clear font, tactile markers, multilingual options.

**Note:** Considering these examples at this stage helps lay the groundwork for defining the scope of the requirements and supports the development of effective solutions in step 4.

### 4.5.2.4 Digital access and support services

- Will information about the good be available online?
  - If so, will it be accessible via:
    - A website?
    - A mobile application?
    - A public-facing or employee-facing portal?
- Will in-person, virtual or a combination of both be required?
- Will a help desk or customer service support be required?
- Will you need to conduct accessibility conformance testing or user testing?

### 4.5.2.5 Balancing accessibility with other requirements

- Is it likely that accessibility requirements may conflict with other requirements such as:
  - Security protocols.
  - Functional specifications of the good being procured.
- If so, how will these conflicts be addressed and requirements prioritized?

**Note:** Accessibility requirements must be defined early in the procurement process to ensure they are appropriately scoped and actionable. At this stage, consider any potential conflicts, such as with security protocols, or other functional specifications. This helps clarify how accessibility will be prioritized and integrated alongside other operational needs. Documenting these considerations supports informed decision-making and reduces the risk of inaccessible outcomes later in the procurement lifecycle.

### 4.5.3 Step 1 outcome

After completing step 1, you should have a clear understanding of the direct and indirect deliverables associated with the good, as well as where accessibility requirements should be applied. The key outcome is a written description of the good including its purpose and scope, the intended end users, and expected deliverables. Section [5.1.1](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring an office printer.

## 4.6 Step 2: Identify barriers that end users may experience

Step 2 builds on the foundation established in step 1 by analyzing how end users may experience barriers when interacting with the good, including any indirect deliverables. This step involves:

- identifying the end users, both current and future; and
- assessing how the design or delivery of the good may limit accessibility or usability for some individuals.

The findings from this step will inform the development of requirements for accessibility in the following steps.

**Note:** A barrier exists when the design of a good, environment (physical or virtual), interaction or activity limits its access or use.

### 4.6.1 Objective

Step 1 helped identify:

- the specifications of the good;
- the end users (including people with disabilities); and
- the indirect deliverables (e.g., support services, instructional materials) that may be needed.

Step 2 builds on step 1 by analyzing how end users may experience barriers when interacting with the good.

## 4.6.2 Questions to ask yourself to identify barriers

The following questions are intended to help identify the barriers that the end users of the good may experience. While not every question will be relevant in all situations, considering these factors will help ensure the good is accessible to a broad range of users. This list of questions is not exhaustive and will vary depending on the good you are procuring.

### 4.6.3 Physical barriers

Physical barriers occur when the design in the built environment or the physical characteristics of goods prevent individuals from using or accessing the good.

**Note:** While this step focuses on the accessibility of the good itself, it is equally important to consider the physical environment where the good will be placed. An accessible good that is installed in a location that cannot be reached or safely used by people with disabilities creates a barrier to use. Ensure that placement, clearance, and surrounding access routes are also reviewed for accessibility.

#### 4.6.3.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Will the good be difficult to use for people with disabilities?
- Is the good designed to be usable from different positions (e.g., standing, seated, or with assistive devices)?
- Does the design of the good allow for flexibility or adjustability to meet individual user needs?
- Are there physical elements (e.g., placement, height, reach range) that may restrict independent use of the good?

### 4.6.3.2 Examples of physical barriers

- Goods or packaging that require fine motor skills to use, such as small buttons, zippers, or latches.
- Controls that require:
  - Tight grasping, twisting, or pinching (e.g., bottle caps, fasteners, small knobs).
  - A high level of force (e.g., stiff buttons, heavy doors, pressure-activated mechanisms).
  - Two hands to operate, which may exclude users with one-handed use or limited coordination (e.g., a printer lid that must be held open with one hand while loading paper with the other).
- Goods that cannot be reached or operated from a seated position, such as high-mounted controls or non-adjustable kiosks.
- Items that cannot be adjusted to accommodate different users (e.g., an office chair with fixed armrests or a non-height-adjustable table).
- Unstable goods that shift or move during use, making them harder to operate with limited mobility or balance (e.g., lightweight desktop scanner that slides when buttons are pressed).
- Goods that are heavy, bulky, or awkward to carry, particularly for individuals with limited strength or one-handed use.
- Handles or grips that are too small, slippery, or poorly placed for stable handling.

### 4.6.4 Communication barriers

Communication barriers arise when information related to a good is presented in formats and language that are not accessible. This information includes instructions, materials, digital interfaces or customer support services. These barriers can prevent effective understanding, interaction, or information exchange which can negatively impact any end user.

#### 4.6.4.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Is the information related to the good (e.g., its use, instructions, and support) available in accessible formats and communicated in multiple ways (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile) to meet the needs of people with disabilities?
- Do visual materials (e.g., diagrams, infographics, signage) include text descriptions or alternative formats?
- Is the information related to the good (e.g., manuals, training materials) free from unnecessary jargon, abbreviations, and complex language?
- Are customer support and helpdesk interactions accessible across multiple channels (e.g., phone, email, chat, relay services)?
- Are training materials and related service communications free from unnecessary jargon, abbreviations, and complex language?
- If the information regarding the use of the good is only available digitally, will this create a barrier for end users with no internet access or who have low digital literacy?
- Can end users control or adjust the speed, timing, or format of messages, alerts, or instructions?

#### 4.6.4.2 Examples of communication barriers include:

- Digital interfaces associated with the good
  - Touchscreen interfaces that do not provide audio feedback or cannot be navigated without visual cues.
  - Interfaces that rely solely on colour to convey information, which can exclude end users with colour vision deficiencies.
  - Automated messages or alerts that are delivered too quickly, without options to replay, pause, or extend the display time.

- Videos that lack accessibility features, such as:
  - sign language interpretation; and
  - subtitles, closed captions, or written transcripts.
- Customer support and helpdesk services
  - Customer support or help desk that are not available in different formats (e.g., in-person, over the phone, through email).
- Training services and learning materials
  - Training materials that do not consider the different ways that people learn and retain information (e.g., auditory learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners).
- Document-based deliverables (e.g., progress or final reports, emails, manuals, training materials) that:
  - lack of plain language or structured formatting;
  - use images without alternative (alt) text or descriptive captions;
  - have low colour contrast between text and background, making reading or viewing images difficult;
  - contain dense text without clear headings or breaks, making comprehension harder;
  - use small or difficult to read fonts, or font types that are not accessible for participants using magnification; and
  - use complex language or figures of speech, sarcasm, euphemisms, technical jargon, undefined abbreviations, or passive voice, which can be harder to process.
- Printed and hard copy materials
  - Hard copy documents, labelling, or instructions that do not include braille or tactile markers when digital alternatives are not feasible.

## 4.6.5 Environmental barriers

Environmental barriers occur when sensory irritants are present or can be due to the design of a space. These barriers may limit an individual's comfort, focus, or ability to remain in a space.

### 4.6.5.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Can the good be used safely and comfortably by someone that requires specific environmental considerations?
- Does it have any features, such as scents, sounds, lights, or textures that could cause discomfort or limit usability for some end users?
  - Does the good emit any scent from materials, adhesives, coatings, or packaging that may trigger sensitivities?
  - Are there any continuous or unexpected sounds (e.g., beeping, fan noise, startup tones) that may cause distress or fatigue for some end users with disabilities?
- Is there a way for end users to adjust or control sensory aspects (e.g., lighting, volume, materials)?
- Are non-essential features (e.g., decorative lighting, motion-triggered sounds) optional or removable?
- Do the materials and finishes address environmental health and sensory safety (e.g., low emissions, hypoallergenic)?
- Have other sensory impacts been considered, such as glare, surface textures, or air quality, especially for indoor use?
- Has the impact of prolonged exposure to the good (e.g., when placed near desks or workstations) on user comfort or health been considered?

## 4.6.5.2 Examples of environmental barriers

- Air quality and chemical sensitivities
  - Goods that emit strong scents, such as cleaning supplies, hand soaps, air fresheners.
  - Goods that off-gas chemicals (e.g., adhesives, plastics, new furniture).
- Lighting conditions
  - Lighting that is too bright, with no dimming controls.  
  
**Note:** A dimming feature also can help people with visual disabilities who may require bright lighting or those who are impacted by high levels of illumination.
  - Unexpected or flashing lights (e.g., status indicators, startup animations) that can trigger sensory overload or migraines.
  - Glare from high-gloss surfaces or screens, which can cause discomfort or limit visibility.
- Noise and disruptive sounds
- Excessive noise from goods, such as:
  - loud ventilation systems, alarms, or machinery; and
  - hand dryers or vacuums that emit high decibel levels.
- Temperature and physical environment
- Temperature-related discomfort from goods that emit heat, lack ventilation, or are cold to the touch for extended use (e.g., plastic seating or chairs that retain heat from nearby radiators or sunlight, becoming uncomfortably warm or sticky for extended sitting periods).

- Surface textures and finishes
  - Surface finishes that are overly rough, sharp, or sticky, which may be uncomfortable for end users with tactile sensitivities (e.g., a handheld tool or stylus with a sticky rubberized grip that attracts dust or residue and causes discomfort for users with texture aversions or sensory sensitivities).
  - Clothing or fabric-based goods with irritating materials, tags, or seams.

## 4.6.6 Technological barriers

Technological barriers occur when digital tools, platforms or systems are not compatible with assistive technologies or do not conform to recognized accessibility standards. These barriers can prevent individuals from accessing, navigating, or using digital content and functions effectively. Technological barriers negatively impact people with disabilities.

### 4.6.6.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Is the good delivered through technology or a digital platform, and if so, is it designed to:
  - Support the use of assistive devices (e.g., screen readers, alternative input devices)?
  - Provide alternate formats, such as audio or visual outputs?
- Does the good conform to recognized ICT accessibility standards (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#))?
- Is the interface consistent and predictable across different functions or screens?
- Will end users be able to customize or adjust settings (e.g., font size, contrast, audio feedback) to meet their needs?

- Does the good work with older versions of assistive technologies, or require only the latest software to function properly?
- Will the good continue to be accessible when software is updated or when used with new devices or platforms in the future?

#### **4.6.6.2 Examples of technological barriers**

- Inaccessible documents that adaptive technology cannot read, such as PDFs without proper tagging or Word documents created without the use of styles.
- Web-based tools or apps that have unlabelled buttons or icons, which screen readers cannot interpret, leading to unusable interfaces.
- Measuring tools that lack accessibility features, such as:
  - scales that do not audibly announce the weight of an item placed on its platform or in a bowl; and
  - digital thermometers without an audio reading option.
- Devices that do not include features to support accessibility such as:
  - magnification or contrast adjustment options; and
  - voice commands or screen readers.
- Alert systems that do not provide multimodal notifications, such as:
  - fire alarms that rely on sound without flashing lights or vibrations; and
  - doorbell or key fob systems that emit audio alerts without visual or tactile feedback.
- Touchscreen devices without tactile or voice-based navigation options, making them inaccessible to end users with disabilities.
- Interfaces that require dragging, swiping, or multi-finger gestures, which may be difficult or impossible for end users with limited dexterity or those using alternative input devices.

- Interactive training tools or kiosks with actions having time-limited response that don't allow end users to pause, repeat, or extend instructions.

## 4.6.7 Attitudinal and organizational barriers

Attitudinal and organizational barriers can also affect how accessibility is addressed during the development of procurement specifications. These barriers may be the result of a pre-existing bias or an organizational practice. These barriers have the potential to limit how accessibility requirements are identified, defined, or prioritized.

Recognizing and addressing these barriers supports more inclusive outcomes and aligns with accessibility obligations under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

### 4.6.7.1 Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers result from a lack of understanding, awareness, and knowledge that reinforces stereotypes, biases, or misconceptions about disability and accessibility. These barriers can influence procurement decisions because we make assumptions about end users and undervalue the importance of accessibility when procuring goods.

#### 4.6.7.1.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Are assumptions being made about what accessibility considerations entail (e.g., only considering mobility-related requirements)?

#### 4.6.7.1.2 Examples of attitudinal barriers in goods procurement

- Assumptions about user experiences:
  - Assuming accessibility only applies to physical access.
  - Discounting feedback from people with disabilities when evaluating the level of accessibility of a good.

## 4.6.7.2 Organizational barriers

Organizational barriers refer to policies, practices and norms that exist within the organization that exclude people with disabilities.

### 4.6.7.2.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Are there internal defaults (e.g., file formats for user manuals, labelling requirements, communication materials) that could create barriers?
- Does a procurement practice create barriers from certain businesses from participating? For example: A short timeline to respond to and submit a bid might discriminate against a business owned by a person with a disability who needs more time.

### 4.6.7.2.2 Examples of organizational barriers in goods procurement:

- Established procurement practices and protocols.
- Internal templates for product labels, quick-start guides, or instructional materials that do not support plain language, high contrast visuals, or accessible formats. For example, goods-related documentation requirements may mandate the use of inaccessible formats (e.g., untagged PDFs).
- Templates used to collect information about the good that exclude accessibility:
  - Templates that default to inaccessible formats or omit sections that prompt users to include accessibility features in specifications for goods (e.g., tactile markings, accessible interfaces, packaging design).

## 4.6.8 Helpful resources

- Take the [Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA Plus\) course](#) to learn how various identities and social factors can influence how different people experience federal government initiatives.
- Consult the Digital Accessibility Toolkit webpage [Designing accessible services](#) to learn how to design for different disabilities.

## 4.6.9 Step 2 outcome

After completing step 2, you should have a clear understanding of the end user's experience and the potential barriers they may encounter. This supports the development of accessibility requirements that help to prevent and remove those barriers. The key outcome is a documented accessibility barrier assessment based on end user needs and consultation. Section [5.1.2](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring an office printer.

## 4.7 Step 3: Gather information

Step 3 builds on the findings from step 2 by using the barriers identified in step 2 to gather information to develop accessibility requirements for the good. This can include:

- Identifying applicable accessibility standards, guidelines and best practices.
- Understanding market capacity to deliver goods that include accessibility features (depending on the scope of the procurement).

### 4.7.1 Objective

The objective of step 3 is to collect and evaluate the information needed to develop accessibility requirements to include in the procurement specifications.

## 4.7.2 Questions to ask yourself when gathering information

The following questions aim to assist in gathering the necessary information to define accessibility requirements for the good. While not all questions may be applicable in every scenario, they serve as a useful framework for ensuring accessibility is integrated into the procurement process.

- What features of the good can include accessibility requirements? Consider all aspects, such as:
  - Physical design (e.g., size, weight, grip force required).
  - Digital interfaces (e.g., touchscreens, keypads, auditory or haptic feedback).
  - Instruction manuals (e.g., plain language, accessible digital formats, availability of braille or large print).
  - Labelling and packaging (e.g., high contrast text, tactile markers, braille).
  - Digital tools or platforms used (e.g., virtual meeting tools, client portals, helpdesk systems).
  - Reports, emails, and written deliverables (e.g., structured formatting, accessible digital formats, plain language).
- Will you need to conduct user and accessibility testing to ensure that the good is accessible?
  - If yes: How will testing be structured?
  - Will people with disabilities be involved in user testing?
- Are there accessibility conformance reports from the vendor?
  - Can the vendor demonstrate experience delivering accessible goods?

- Have any third-party audits or certifications been completed?
- Are there national or international accessibility standards, guidelines, or best practices you can apply when developing requirements for the good (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#))?
  - If yes, who will conduct the accessibility conformance testing (for example, a technical specialist within your organization, or will you need to contract with a third party to provide this expertise)?
- What is the market capacity to deliver a good that meets the accessibility requirements and standards you have identified?
- Are there existing goods that meet accessibility standards, or will custom modifications be required?
- Have you considered how much time is required to evaluate bid submissions and the resulting deliverables?

### 4.7.3 Helpful resources

- [Guideline on making information technology usable by all](#)
- [ICT accessibility requirements wizard](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
- [Accessible virtual events](#)
- [Create document](#)
- [Guide for including accessibility in Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\) related procurement](#)
- [Guidance on the accessible Canada Regulations – consulting persons with disabilities](#)
- [Guide to planning inclusive meetings](#)

To learn more about writing in plain language, please consult the following resources:

- [Plain language writing resources](#)
- [CAN/ASC-3.1: Plain language](#)

### **4.7.4 Step 3 outcome**

After completing step 3, you should have gathered sufficient information to develop accessibility requirements that align with recognized standards and reflect what is available in the market. The key outcome is a summary of relevant accessibility standards, research related to the good, and supplier input. Section [5.1.3](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring an office printer.

## **4.8 Step 4: Develop procurement requirements**

Step 4 builds on step 3 by using the validated standards, market research, and supplier input to define clear and enforceable procurement requirements. This ensures accessibility is integrated into the specifications for the procurement, evaluation criteria, and resulting contract terms.

### **4.8.1 Objective**

This step focuses on defining measurable compliance requirements, verifying accessibility claims, securing long-term supplier commitments. By developing clear requirements, a procurement process is created that drives accessibility innovation, reduces barriers, and ensures the good meets the needs of all end users, including people with disabilities.

## 4.8.2 Questions to ask yourself

These guiding questions help refine and finalize accessibility requirements to ensure they are enforceable and integrated throughout the procurement process. While not every question will apply in all cases, considering these aspects will help establish clear expectations and accountability for accessible procurement.

- Is it expected that the accessibility standards identified in step 3 will change throughout the duration of the contract?
  - If yes, should the contract require the supplier to comply with updated or revised accessibility standards?
    - If yes, would an amendment to the contract be needed to support these changes?
- How will it be confirmed that the good meets the accessibility requirements?
  - When will it be confirmed that the good meets the accessibility requirements (e.g., at delivery, periodically, or throughout the contract)?
- If testing is planned, have any user or accessibility testing requirements been included?
  - Will user testing that includes people with disabilities be conducted?
  - Will accessibility conformance testing be conducted?
- How should suppliers demonstrate their compliance with the accessibility requirements?
  - Should they provide certifications, conformance reports, or accessibility roadmaps?

- If requirements are included, will they be evaluated as part of the solicitation process?
  - If yes, will accessibility requirements be mandatory or point rated technical evaluation criteria, or both?
  - Has plain language been used to describe the requirements?
- Based on the results of the market analysis, are there suppliers who are able to meet the accessibility requirements or standards?
- If accessibility cannot be fully achieved at the time of bid closing, should the requirements include flexibility for implementing accessibility features in phases over time?

### 4.8.3 Develop accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria

Building on steps 1 through 3, this Section converts identified needs into enforceable accessibility requirements to include in your Statement of Work (SOW) or Statement of Requirements (SOR). It also provides you with guidance for the development of evaluation criteria for the solicitation process.

#### 4.8.3.1 Resulting accessibility requirements

Accessibility requirements should include minimum compliance expectations as well as any value-added features that enhance inclusive use. Key areas may include:

- Compliance with recognized standards
  - Requirements should reference applicable standards identified in step 3 (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for deliverables relating to information and communication technology, [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#)

for deliverables relating to the physical or built environment).

- Ensure that the contract includes clauses requiring the supplier to maintain compliance with accessibility standards over the duration of the contract.
- Implementation roadmap
  - If full compliance with accessibility requirements cannot be achieved at bid closing, the resulting contractor must provide a roadmap, plan, or timeline showing how compliance will be achieved during the contract period.
- Physical design and controls
  - The good should be usable by individuals with a range of abilities. Requirements may address:
    - Size, weight, and stability.
    - Force required to operate components.
    - Reach range, height, and adjustability.
    - Visual contrast or tactile cues.
- User interface and interaction methods
  - If the good includes a digital interface (e.g., touchscreen, app, or software), it should be compatible with assistive technologies and meet digital accessibility standards.
- Instructions and documentation
  - Information related to the good including operating manuals and quick-start guides should be available in accessible format and conform to the [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#).

- User testing and feedback integration
  - Where appropriate, requirements may include testing with people with disabilities during development and delivery of the good.
  - Ensure the contract includes a requirement to integrate and respond to feedback obtained from user testing.
  
- Responding to accessibility issues
  - Include requirements for the supplier to respond to and resolve end users' accessibility complaints within the contract period. This may require the supplier to implement a feedback mechanism to:
    - receive reports of accessibility issues from end users;
    - resolve reported accessibility issues; and
    - inform the procurement lead of all reported accessibility issues and their resolution.

#### **4.8.3.2 Evaluation criteria**

Accessibility should be reflected in mandatory and point-rated evaluation criteria. These may include:

- Mandatory requirements, which could include:
  - Demonstrating compliance with accessibility requirements.
  - Providing evidence of how the proposed good meets the standards and requirements identified in step 3.
  
- Point-rated criteria, which could include awarding points for:
  - Features or approaches that exceed minimum accessibility requirements.

- Demonstrated experience delivering accessible goods and services.
- Evaluation process, which could include:
  - Determining whether to conduct user testing with people with disabilities or accessibility conformance testing, or both.

While this section focuses on defining requirements and evaluation criteria, additional accessibility considerations may be included and are covered in Section [4.8.4](#) Other considerations.

## 4.8.4 Other considerations

- Review and assess the contracted deliverables to ensure they meet the accessibility requirements specified in the resulting contract.
- Develop a budget to include accessibility conformance testing, end user testing, and other validation requirements (if applicable) into the project plan.
- Consider including a clause in the solicitation to allow bidders to propose improvements to accessibility requirements during the solicitation process.
- Ensure that solicitation documents are written in plain language and make them available in accessible formats.
- If the supplier is required to work on-site at Canada's location, ensure the work site (location, parking, workstation, etc.) is accessible.
- Ensure that any virtual or in-person industry engagement activities (e.g., industry days, one-on-one meetings) are inclusive and accessible.
- Determine accommodation requirements for any mandatory site visits.

## 4.8.5 Step 4 outcome

After completing step 4, you should have a finalized set of accessibility specifications that ensure accessibility is maintained throughout the contract lifecycle. Section [5.1.4](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring an office printer.

## 4.9 Justifying the absence of accessibility requirements

Business owners within an organization should always begin the procurement planning process assuming that accessibility applies to their good or service. While it may not always be possible to include accessibility requirements in a procurement, excluding accessibility requirements should be the exception, not the norm. A decision to exclude requirements for accessibility should be taken only after analysis and consultation.

When requirements for accessibility are excluded from the specifications for a procurement, the business owner must explain the rationale for this decision. This is currently a mandatory requirement in the context of Government of Canada procurement in accordance with clauses 4.2.7.1 and 4.2.7.1.1 of the [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#).

This justification should demonstrate that the business owner has:

- assessed the good or service for potential accessibility barriers and impacts on people with disabilities;
- researched applicable accessibility standards and best practices;
- consulted with people with disabilities and accessibility experts;
- engaged the market to explore the feasibility of including accessibility requirements;
- considered alternative ways to enhance accessibility even if requirements are not included;

- assessed the risks and implications of not addressing accessibility, such as legal, financial, reputational, and human rights risks; and
- developed a plan to address accessibility barriers through other means such as training, support services, or complementary initiatives.

Procurement leads should work closely with their business owners to ensure they explore opportunities to incorporate accessibility. The procurement lead ensures that the written justification is kept in the procurement file.

# 5 Scenario

## 5.1 Procuring an office printer: Applying the four-step process

Your organization needs to procure new multifunction office printers for use by its employees. To ensure compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and relevant accessibility standards, you apply the four-step process outlined in this guide to embed accessibility throughout the procurement lifecycle.

This scenario is provided for illustrative purposes only. Accessibility must be considered for each procurement.

### 5.1.1 Step 1: Define your requirements

This step aligns with the guidance in Section [4.5](#), step 1 and illustrates how the principles identified in this step are applied in practice within this scenario.

You begin by identifying the requirements of the printer, including how it will be used and by whom. This includes considering how end users will interact with the printer in everyday settings. The goal is to ensure that the printer can be operated independently and effectively by all employees, including employees with disabilities.

#### 5.1.1.1 Understanding end user interactions

- The printer will be used by employees, including employees with disabilities that may include but are not limited to mobility, dexterity, visual, and cognitive disabilities.

- End users may interact with the printer through physical components (e.g., paper trays, control panels), touchscreen interfaces, and associated digital printing software.

### 5.1.1.2 Accessibility-related requirements

**Note:** Accessibility-related requirements are included at this stage to ensure accessibility is embedded from the outset as a core aspect of how the good must function. Identifying these requirements early helps shape performance expectations, inform technical specifications, and support equitable use by all end users, including people with disabilities.

- **User interface:** Large tactile buttons, voice-guided navigation, customizable contrast and font size.
- **Physical adjustments:** Height-adjustable (to allow seated or standing access) or wheelchair-accessible placement, trays and lids operable with one hand and minimal force.
- **Information access:** Screen reader compatibility, alternative digital access via a mobile app or screen reader compatible computer software.
- **Support services:** Clear plain-language instructions, remote assistance options, accessible troubleshooting guides.
- **Conformance:** Alignment with accessibility standards such as:
  - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for all information and communication technology-related components
  - [CAN/ASC-1.1-Employment:2024 \(REV2025\)](#) for employment-related goods
  - [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) for communication.
  - [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#) for physical environments, as applicable.

The outcome of step 1 is a documented description of the printer's functional scope, including how it will be used, who will use it, and any supporting materials or services (indirect deliverables) required.

## **5.1.2 Step 2: Identify barriers that end users may experience**

This aligns with the guidance in Section [4.6](#), step 2 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

To assess potential accessibility barriers, you should consult with:

- Employees with disabilities.
- Internal accessibility specialists.
- Human resources and learning and development staff.
- External accessibility consultants and advocacy organizations.
- Employees from various departments who have participated in past training sessions.

### **5.1.2.1 Assessment of identified barriers**

#### **5.1.2.1.1 Physical barriers**

- Controls or screens positioned too high for seated users.
- Buttons requiring fine motor skills, sharp eyesight, precise dexterity or excessive force.
- Paper trays or lids that require tight grasping.
- Printer surfaces that shift or tip during use, making operation unstable for some end users.

#### **5.1.2.1.2 Communication barriers**

- Small display screens with unclear messages.
- Printed manuals only in small-font hard copy.
- Lack of alternative formats for user materials, such as versions of manuals or instructions in plain language, accessible digital content, or Braille.
- Lack of audible alerts for errors.
- Status indicators (e.g., “low ink,” “paper jam”) presented only visually without audio or tactile feedback.
- Use of technical jargon in setup instructions without plain language alternatives.

#### **5.1.2.1.3 Environmental barriers**

- Strong-smelling inks or materials.
- High noise output from printing functions.
- Flashing indicator lights with no brightness controls.
- Printer heat output affecting comfort during prolonged use.
- Glossy surfaces or screens creating glare in well-lit environments.

#### **5.1.2.1.4 Technological barriers**

- Touchscreens incompatible with screen readers.
- No voice command options.
- Scanned documents produced by the printer do not include Optional Character Recognition (OCR), making the content inaccessible to assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers cannot read a scanned letter or form if the text is not machine-readable).
- Web interfaces that don't meet digital accessibility standards.

- Interfaces that rely on drag-and-drop or multi-touch gestures, limiting access for end users with motor disabilities.
- No support for adjusting settings like text size, contrast, or input preferences.

**Note:** While this step focuses on the accessibility of the printer itself, it is also essential to consider the workspace where the printer will be installed. For example, a height-adjustable or tactile-interface printer still presents a barrier if it is placed in a narrow hallway, under a counter, or in a space without sufficient clearance for wheelchair users or individuals using mobility aids. Ensure that placement, maneuvering space, and surrounding surfaces are accessible to support independent use.

The outcome for step 2 is a barrier assessment that identifies potential accessibility challenges end users may face when interacting with the printer, including physical, communication, environmental and technological barriers.

### 5.1.3 Step 3: Gather information

At this stage, you will collect the information needed to develop specific accessibility requirements for the printer. This involves reviewing applicable standards, consulting with experts, and evaluating the accessibility features available in the market. This aligns with the guidance in Section [4.7](#), step 3 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

#### To support this process:

- Review relevant accessibility standards, including:
  - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for all information and communication technology-related components.

- [CAN/ASC-1.1-Employment:2024 \(REV2025\)](#) for employment-related goods.
  - [CAN-ASC-2.3 - Draft Version: Model Standard for the Built Environment – Accessibility for Federally Regulated Entities as Defined in the Accessible Canada Act - Accessibility Standards Canada](#) for physical environments, as applicable.
  - [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) for communication.
  - [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#) for physical environments, as applicable.
- Consult a subject-matter experts to identify best practices and capabilities of available printers.
  - Issue a Request for Information (RFI) to assess the market’s ability to meet accessibility needs.
  - Engage accessibility advisors or staff with disabilities to gain insight into real-world usability of available printer models.
  - Review other procurements that have successfully integrated accessibility features.

**During this process:**

- Verify accessibility features, such as screen reader compatibility, tactile controls, voice navigation, and OCR functionality.
- Confirm the accessibility of support materials and services, including user manuals, training content and customer service, ensuring they are available in accessible formats (e.g., plain language, tagged PDFs, large print, captioned videos).
- Evaluate whether suppliers are able to meet the desired accessibility requirements and identify any gaps that may require adaptation or further innovation.
- Assess whether accessibility features can be implemented immediately or whether a phased implementation plan is needed.

- Request or review documentation for the good such as accessibility conformance reports (e.g., Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPATs)) or demos of the accessibility features.

The outcome of step 3 is a summary of relevant accessibility standards, available features of the good, and supplier capabilities that will inform the development of accessibility requirements to include in the specifications for the procurement.

## **5.1.4 Step 4: Develop procurement requirements**

Based on the information gathered in steps 1 through 3, you develop a clear and comprehensive set of accessibility requirements to be included in the specifications and evaluation criteria. This aligns with the guidance in Section [4.8](#), step 4 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

The accessibility requirements are structured around the following key areas:

- Compliance with standards.
- Accessible user interface.
- Multimodal learning and support.
- User testing.

These categories are supported by detailed technical specifications.

### **5.1.4.1 Physical requirements**

- Controls operable from seated position.
- Large, easy to press buttons that require minimal force.
- Trays and lids operable with one hand, without twisting or grasping.
- Output bin location reachable from a seated position.

- Status lights or indicators (e.g., paper jam, ink low) placed within accessible reach/viewing angles.
- Front-facing access to controls, trays, and jam areas, to avoid requiring end users to reach around the device.

#### **5.1.4.2 Communication requirements**

- High contrast and plain language on-screen messages.
- Volume-adjustable audio alerts (e.g., for print job confirmation, errors, or readiness).
- Instructional content provided in plain language, large print, tagged PDFs, and Braille (if requested).
- Multilingual on-screen display options, including simplified language settings.
- Consistent use of images and symbols alongside text to help end users with low literacy or cognitive disabilities interpret options.

#### **5.1.4.3 Environmental and sensory requirements**

- Low noise operation or adjustable audio.
- Low-VOC (volatile organic compound) materials; avoid strong-smelling ink or toner.
- Adjustable screen brightness; avoid flashing lights.
- Matte or anti-glare display surface.

#### **5.1.4.4 Technological requirements**

- Touchscreens that support screen readers and voice commands.
- OCR functionality required for scanning.
- Web-based interfaces that comply with digital accessibility standards.

- Mobile device compatibility that supports accessible apps (e.g., screen reader-friendly companion app).
- Braille-ready output options (e.g., ability to integrate with third-party Braille embossers if required).
- Keyboard or alternate input port that allows connection of an accessible input device instead of relying solely on touchscreen input.
- Firmware that supports accessibility standards (e.g., software updates don't remove accessible features or introduce inaccessible elements).

#### **5.1.4.5 Evaluation criteria**

- **Mandatory Requirements:** Bidders must demonstrate conformance to minimum accessibility requirements.
- **Point-Rated Criteria:** Additional points awarded for features exceeding minimum accessibility requirements.

#### **5.1.4.6 Other considerations**

- The contract includes clauses requiring the supplier to maintain conformance with evolving accessibility standards over the contract period.
- The contract includes a feedback mechanism for end users to report accessibility issues and ensures a process for resolution.
- A budget is allocated for periodic accessibility audits and end user testing to validate conformance.

The outcome of step 4 is a finalized set of accessibility specifications, evaluation criteria, and contract clauses that ensure accessibility is considered, measurable, and enforceable throughout the procurement and contract lifecycle.

## 5.1.5 Outcome

By following this structured approach, the organization successfully procures a printer that limits barriers and promotes inclusion. This helps to ensure that all end users can use the device independently and effectively.

# 6 Annex A – Accessibility procurement checklist

This checklist supports the application of the four-step process described in the guide. It is designed to help you document due diligence and ensure accessibility is considered throughout the procurement lifecycle.

This checklist should be used in conjunction with the full guide. Referring to the checklist alone does not replace the need for thoughtful engagement with the guidance and scenario presented in each step throughout clauses 4 and 5. Effective integration of accessibility requires a comprehensive understanding of the process outlined throughout the document.

While this checklist provides a strong foundation, it is not exhaustive. Additional or modified checklist items may be necessary depending on the nature and complexity of the good being procured.

## 6.1 Step 1: Define your requirements

- Have you clearly defined the purpose of the direct deliverable?
- Have you identified the end users, including people with disabilities?
- Have you documented how end users will interact with the good in everyday use?
- Have you considered indirect deliverables (e.g., instructional materials, support services)?
- Have you considered how the physical environment may impact the accessibility (e.g., placement, reach, lighting)?
- Have you documented any assumptions or limitations related to end user diversity or accessibility needs?
- Have you considered future or evolving accessibility needs (e.g., software updates, changes in the existing end user base)?

## 6.2 Step 2: Identify barriers

- Have you conducted a barrier assessment across the following types:
  - Physical (e.g., placement of controls).
  - Communication (e.g., language, formats).
  - Environmental (e.g., noise, lighting, sensory triggers).
  - Technological (e.g., web-based interfaces, touchscreens).
  - Attitudinal (e.g., assumptions).
  - Organizational (e.g., systemic barriers).
- Have you consulted with end users including people with disabilities or organizations representing people with disabilities?
- Have you consulted functional staff (e.g., IT, facilities) about potential barriers in the deployment or use of the good?
- Have you reviewed the accessibility features and performance of similar goods?
- Have you documented how each identified barrier could affect end users and possible strategies to address them?

## 6.3 Step 3: Gather information

- Have you reviewed applicable accessibility standards and best practices, such as:
  - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services.](#)
  - [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment.](#)
- Have you engaged subject matter experts to understand market capacity?

- Have you issued a request for information (RFI) or other market-sounding tools to gather supplier input on accessibility?
- Have you obtained or reviewed Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs), VPATs, or sample deliverables?
- Have you verified availability of assistive features (e.g., tactile input, OCR, screen reader support)?
- Have you assessed whether support materials (manuals, training, customer support) are available in accessible formats?
- Have you identified whether accessibility features can be phased in over time or adapted post-purchase?

## 6.4 Step 4: Develop final accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria

- Have you developed specific, measurable and enforceable accessibility requirements that will address the identified needs and barriers?
- Have you organized accessibility requirements by relevant barrier types (e.g., physical, communication, technological)?
- Have you developed evaluation criteria that assess accessibility, such as:
  - mandatory compliance with standards;
  - point-rated features that go beyond minimum standards; and
  - point-rated usability testing of accessibility features?
- Have you clearly defined contract clauses to require:
  - ongoing conformance with current accessibility standards;
  - feedback mechanisms for end users to report accessibility issues, and requirements for contractors to remediate; and

- accessibility training for end users, which can also include training for end users with disabilities who require additional information on the accessibility features of a good (if applicable)?
- Have you ensured that the bid evaluation team understands how to assess accessibility-related responses provided by bidders?
- Have you planned for how accessibility performance will be monitored, audited, or updated during the contract period?

## **6.5 If accessibility requirements are not included**

- Have you prepared a written justification explaining why accessibility requirements were not included in the procurement?
- Does the justification document the steps taken, such as:
  - Consultation with end users and people with disabilities?
  - Review of relevant accessibility standards and best practices?
  - Engagement with suppliers to assess market capacity?
- Have you assessed and documented any risks (e.g., operational, reputational) associated with excluding accessibility?
- Have you considered alternative ways to enhance accessibility?
- Have you developed a plan to address accessibility barriers through other means such as training, support services, or complementary initiatives?
- Has the justification been reviewed and approved by procurement officials, senior management, or those with the authority to approve purchases, and is it retained in the procurement file?

**Note:** This Section applies only in cases where accessibility requirements are not included. See Section [4.9](#) of this guide.

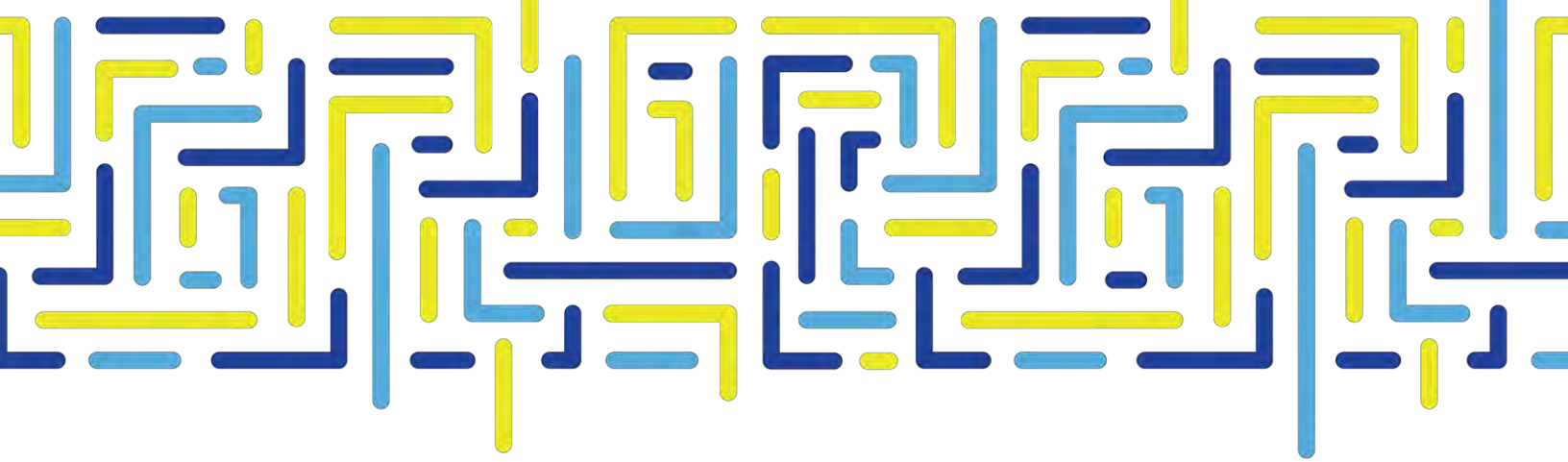
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# Procurement of accessible services

August 26, 2025

## Technical guide



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# 1 Legal disclaimer

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## 2 About this technical guide

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

This is a jointly developed technical guide between Accessibility Standards Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Accessibility Standards Canada develops equity-based accessibility standards and guidance. Accessibility Standards Canada seeks to create inclusive standards that can impact all persons with disabilities while recognizing their intersectionality and expertise. Accessibility Standards Canada is sharing this technical guide so that organizations can begin implementing this guidance in their work while a standard in this area is being developed. This technical guide focuses on areas where people with disabilities face barriers in the procurement and the services acquired through procurement. Equity refers to fairness, justice, and freedom from discrimination. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and focuses on enabling all individuals to achieve the same outcomes.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) supports federal departments and agencies in their daily operations as their central purchasing agent, real property manager, treasurer, accountant, pay and pension administrator, integrity advisor, common service provider and linguistic authority. Procurement is an important area where PSPC supports the Government of Canada's priority of a barrier-free society.

The Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) within PSPC was established to help federal government buyers understand how to consider and integrate accessibility requirements when procuring goods and services. The Centre promotes awareness about the value of accessible goods and services as an important step to enhance inclusion for people of all abilities. The Centre is also a resource hub for federal government departments to support the purchase of accessible goods and services.

## **2.1 Audience**

This technical guide is intended for all Government of Canada departments, agencies, and federally regulated entities, as well as anyone seeking guidance to improve accessibility in this area.

## 3 Context

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

### 3.1 General

Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides that align with its vision. This vision is rooted in the principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us.” These principles reflect a commitment to breaking down barriers to accessibility that can impact all persons in Canada—especially persons with disabilities and their families, —ensuring full and equal participation in society.

As part of the “nothing without us” principle, Accessibility Standards Canada promotes that accessibility is good for everyone, as it can have society wide benefits. As a result, Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides to promote accessibility and accessible best practices. This means that this technical guide incorporates best practices, the lived experience of people with disabilities, and information aimed at achieving the highest level of accessibility. This approach is meant to drive innovation, foster change, and promote requirements and best practices that have broad positive impacts.

This approach strives to improve outcomes for all Canadians, including creating employment opportunities and solutions that contribute to Canada’s economic growth.

By proactively removing barriers, these guides' support the key accessibility principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us”, support organizations on their accessibility journeys, and move Canada closer to being barrier-free by 2040. The technical content of this guide benefits:

- people with disabilities;
- people without disabilities;
- the federal public sector;
- the private sector;
- non-government organizations;
- Indigenous communities; and
- society.

The guidance provided in sections 4 through 6, support the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

## 3.2 Accessible Canada Act

The *Accessible Canada Act* provides a framework which allows for the proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers wherever Canadians interact with areas under federal jurisdiction. It puts in place mechanisms that would systematically address accessibility. The purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in the following priority areas:

- employment;
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces);
- 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; and
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

## **3.3 Accessible Canada Act consultations**

To inform the development of the *Accessible Canada Act*, in 2016 to 2017 the Government of Canada undertook the largest and most accessible consultation on disability issues that Canada has ever seen. Over 6000 Canadians and over 90 organizations shared their ideas about an accessible Canada. Participants wanted the legislation to apply to all areas under the control of the Government of Canada and that Canada should become a leader in accessibility. While participants acknowledged that the development and implementation of some standards will take longer than others, they noted guidance should be clear and any accessibility requirements should lead to positive lasting change.

The “nothing without us” principle means that people with disabilities are engaged and involved in the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers. This also means consulting and working closely with people with disabilities, diverse disability communities and other experts to develop accessibility guidance to remove barriers. The principle of “nothing without us” drives everything we do at Accessibility Standards Canada, including relying on the knowledge and experiences of people with disabilities in the development of accessibility guidance.

## 3.4 Key Accessible Canada Act principles

The *Act* is to be implemented in recognition of, and in accordance with, the following principles:

- everyone must be treated with dignity;
- everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able and wish to have;
- everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society;
- everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire;
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kinds of barriers and discrimination intersect;
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility.

## 3.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. The United Nations Convention protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination, and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has served as the major catalyst in the global movement towards viewing persons with disabilities as full and equal members of society. The human rights approach has moved away from viewing persons with disabilities as subjects of charity, medical treatment and social protection. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* were foundational human rights frameworks that support equity on which the *Accessible Canada Act* was built.

# 4 Introduction

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

Whether you are a business owner (such as a client department, agency, or technical authority) or a procurement lead within an organization, this guide is intended to help you understand how to consider accessibility when defining the requirements for the procurement a service.

## 4.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this guide, the following definitions apply:

**End user** - The final user who will use the procured service. End users can include any of the following user groups:

- People with disabilities.
- Members of the public.
- Employees.
- Businesses and private sector entities.

**Service contract** - A contract for the provision of services, including printing services. These services are referred to as “direct deliverables.” Service contracts may also include related deliverables that support the use and delivery of the service and are referred to as “indirect deliverables.”

**Direct deliverables** - The core service components that are purchased, contracted, or otherwise acquired by a business and that end users interact with or receive directly. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Professional and consulting services.
- Maintenance and repair services.
- Training and instructional services.
- Transportation and delivery services.
- Help desk services.
- Communication and IT support services.

**Example:** A virtual training session delivered via a web conferencing platform.

**Indirect deliverables** - The supporting elements that accompany or relate to the direct deliverable.

**Example:** Progress reports, documentation, digital tools, virtual or in-person meetings, or reference materials.

This guide uses the terms **direct** and **indirect deliverables** to distinguish between these components when applying accessibility requirements. Accessibility considerations apply to both. For example, even if the direct deliverable cannot be made fully accessible, accompanying indirect deliverables must still be designed to avoid barriers.

## 4.2 Roles and responsibilities

The **Business owner** is typically the project lead, program authority, or requestor of the service within an organization. They are responsible for defining the intended outcomes of the procurement, including the operational requirements and identifying how accessibility should be integrated. The Business Owner is also responsible for providing a clear and written explanation when accessibility requirements are not included in the specifications for a procurement.

The **Procurement lead**, often referred to as the contracting authority, procurement officer, or buyer within an organization, is responsible for overseeing the procurement process. They are often responsible for preparing solicitation documents, ensuring compliance with legal and policy requirements, coordinating the evaluation process, and managing the contract. The Procurement Lead also ensures that the Business Owner considers accessibility and provides a written explanation when accessibility requirements are excluded from the specifications for the procurement.

## 4.3 Consultation and inclusivity

Organizations are encouraged to consult with end users, including people with disabilities, to inform the identification of accessibility requirements. These consultations can help ensure that the direct and indirect deliverables are usable and inclusive. However, it is recognized that consulting end users for every individual procurement is not always practical or required. Instead, organizations should aim to engage people with disabilities when developing standards or commodity guidance and templates for commonly acquired services, and, where appropriate, during service delivery, ensuring that accessibility needs are meaningfully considered throughout the process.

## 4.4 Note on language

Throughout this guide, “you” refers to the individual or team responsible for the activities described in each step. These responsibilities may vary across organizations but generally align with the roles defined above. In smaller organizations, one person may fulfill multiple roles, and accessibility responsibilities may be assigned based on internal capacity or external support.

## 4.5 Step 1: Defining your requirements

The first step is to understand the intended outcomes of the procurement and the operational requirements the service must meet, as well as the expected deliverables outlined in the contract. Developing a clear Statement of Work (SOW) or Statement of Requirements (SOR) will help you to consider:

- How end users are expected to interact with the service.
- What barriers they might experience when doing so.

### 4.5.1 Objective

The objective of step 1 is to identify the requirements for the procurement of the service. This includes not only the core functions of the service itself, but also indirect deliverables, such as instruction manuals or user guides.

### 4.5.2 Questions to ask yourself to help identify accessibility requirements

The following questions are intended to help you identify accessibility requirements to include in the SOW or SOR. The following list of questions is not exhaustive and will vary depending on the service you are buying.

### 4.5.2.1 Purpose of the service

- What is the purpose of the service required? For example:
  - Is it to conduct research and prepare a report?
  - Is it to develop a digital product or digital content? (e.g., website, mobile application, social media posts, videos, e-learning modules)
  - Is it to develop and deliver training sessions? (e.g., workshops, webinars, onboarding programs)
  - Is it to provide maintenance and support or repair services for a facility or a piece of equipment? (e.g., janitorial services, printer maintenance)
- Will supporting documentation be included, such as instruction manuals or user guides?

### 4.5.2.2 End users

- Who will use the service or interact with the service provider, now and in the future?
  - External users, such as:
    - Members of the public, including people with disabilities.
    - Public sector employees (federal, provincial, municipal).
    - Non-profit organizations.
    - Businesses and private sector entities.
  - Internal users within your organization
- Do the end users include people with disabilities?

**Note:** These considerations may overlap with step 2 which focuses on identifying barriers. However, considering a broad range of end users early in the process helps ensure barriers are fully assessed in the next step.

#### **4.5.2.3 Information and communication requirements**

- Will you require written material such as reports, training materials, presentation slides, emails or communications products?
- Will you need to make information available online?
  - If so, will it be accessible via:
    - A website?
    - A mobile application?
    - A government portal or intranet?

#### **4.5.2.4 Delivery and support requirements**

- Will you require the service delivery to be in-person, virtual, or a combination of both?
- Will you require content to be delivered in real-time (live) or on-demand (pre-recorded)?
- Will the service require accessibility accommodation for end users (e.g., ASL interpretation, captioning, plain language formats)?
- Will you require a help desk or customer service support?
- Will you need to conduct accessibility conformance testing or user testing?

#### **4.5.2.5 Balancing accessibility with other requirements**

Is it likely that accessibility requirements may conflict with other requirements such as:

- security protocols; and

- functional specifications for the service being procured.

If yes, how will these conflicts be addressed and requirements prioritized?

**Note:** Accessibility requirements must be defined early in the procurement process to ensure they are appropriately scoped and actionable. At this stage, consider any potential conflicts, such as with security protocols, or other functional specifications. This helps clarify how accessibility will be prioritized and integrated alongside other operational needs. Documenting these considerations supports informed decision-making and reduces the risk of inaccessible outcomes later in the procurement lifecycle.

### 4.5.3 Step 1 outcome

After completing step 1, you should have a clear understanding of the direct and indirect deliverables associated with the service, as well as where accessibility requirements should be applied. The key outcome is a written description of the service, including its purpose, scope, delivery format (e.g., in-person, virtual), intended end users, and expected deliverables. Section [5.1.1](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring a training service.

## 4.6 Step 2: Identify barriers that end users may experience

Step 2 builds on the foundation established in step 1 by analyzing how end users may experience barriers when interacting with the service or service provider. This includes analyzing any related materials, platforms, or support functions. This step involves:

- identifying the end users, both current and future; and
- assessing how the design or delivery of the service may limit accessibility or usability for some individuals.

The findings from this step will inform the development of requirements for accessibility in the following steps.

**Note:** A barrier exists when the design or delivery of a service, environment (physical or virtual), interaction, or activity limits its access or use.

## 4.6.1 Objective

Step 1 helped identify:

- the requirements of the service;
- the end users (including people with disabilities); and
- the indirect deliverables (e.g., support functions, instructional materials, digital platforms) that may be needed.

Step 2 builds on step 1 by analyzing how end users may experience barriers when interacting with the service.

## 4.6.2 Questions to ask yourself to identify barriers

The following questions are intended to help identify the barriers that the end users of the service may experience. While not every question will be relevant in all situations, considering these factors will help ensure the service is accessible to a broad range of users. This list of questions is not exhaustive and will vary depending on the service you are buying.

### 4.6.2.1 Physical barriers

Physical barriers occur when the design in the built environment or the physical setup for the delivery of a service prevent individuals from using or accessing the service.

#### 4.6.2.1.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Will the delivery of services create barriers for people with disabilities?
- Are there physical elements of service delivery (e.g., signage, counters, kiosks) that may restrict independent access?

#### 4.6.2.1.2 Examples of physical barriers

- Service locations that lack the following:
  - Accessible transit options or designated accessible parking.
  - Step-free entryways, ramps, elevators, or automatic door openers.
  - Adequate doorway widths, hallways, pathways, or turning space to accommodate mobility aids.
  - Accessible restrooms, seating areas, or waiting areas.
- Services that cannot be accessed or used from a seated position (e.g., kiosks with elevated screens, standing-only service counters).
- In-person events, such as site visits, meetings, training, or consultations that:
  - are held in inaccessible venues (e.g., no elevators, narrow doorways, obstructed access routes); or
  - do not offer seating options that accommodate diverse needs (e.g., chairs with armrests, adjustable-height seating, firm and supportive seats, or spaces for mobility aids).
- Physical service setups that require navigating unstable, crowded, or uneven floor spaces that may pose fall or navigation risks.

## 4.6.2.2 Communication barriers

Communication barriers arise when information related to a service is presented in formats, language, or systems that are not accessible. This information includes instructions, materials, digital interfaces, or customer support services. These barriers can prevent effective understanding, interaction, or information exchange which can negatively impact any end-user.

### 4.6.2.2.1 Questions to ask yourself

- Is the information related to the service (e.g., instructions, updates, training materials, or support), available in accessible formats and communicated in multiple ways (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile) to meet the needs of people with disabilities?
  - If the information regarding the service is only available digitally, will this create a barrier for end users with no internet access or who have low digital literacy?
- Do visual materials (e.g., presentations, signage, infographics) include text descriptions or alternative formats?
- Are customer support and helpdesk interactions accessible across multiple channels (e.g., phone, email, chat, relay services)?
- Are training materials and related service communications free from unnecessary jargon, abbreviations, and complex language?
- Can end users control or adjust the pace, format, or delivery method of information (e.g., pause or replay instructions or messages)?

### 4.6.2.2.2 Examples of communication barriers

- Digital services delivery
  - Web-based or digital platforms used to deliver services that lack clear navigation, meaningful labels, or descriptive headings.

- Lack of error messages, feedback, or guidance to support user interaction with service portals or tools.
- Use of complex language, technical jargon, or unexplained acronyms in instructions, support pages, or other service-related content.
- Customer support and helpdesk services
  - Limited support channels. (e.g., no online chat, text relay, or email options).
  - Phone support without TTY or relay services for users who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Document- deliverables (e.g., reports, presentations, emails)
  - Lack of plain language or structured formatting.
  - Use of images without alternative (Alt) text or descriptive captions.
  - Low colour contrast between text and background.
  - Small or difficult to read fonts not optimized for screen readers or magnification.
  - Overly dense text or complicated sentence structures that are hard to follow and hinder comprehension.
  - Use of passive voice, sarcasm, euphemisms, abstract language or complex figures of speech.
- Training services and learning materials
  - Training provided in only one learning style or format (e.g., heavily text-based without interactive or visual components).
  - Lack of alternative formats (e.g., no audio transcripts, no captioned videos, or tactile materials).
  - Lack of live sign language interpretation or necessary accommodations during in-person or online training sessions.

- Video and audio content
  - No sign language interpretation, subtitles, closed captions, or transcripts.
  - Poor audio quality that impairs clarity.
- Printed and hardcopy materials
  - Absence of braille, tactile markings, or large print when digital alternatives are not available.
  - Labels or signage that is not accessible for people with disabilities.

### **4.6.2.3 Environmental barriers**

Environmental barriers occur when sensory irritants are present or can be due to the design of a space. These barriers may limit an individual's comfort, focus, or ability to participate fully in the service being delivered, especially in in person settings.

#### **4.6.2.3.1 Questions to ask yourself**

- Will the delivery of the service impact individuals with, but not limited to:
  - Chemical sensitivities, allergies, or asthma?
  - Sensory sensitivities to light, sound, temperature, or touch?
  - Health conditions that require specific environmental accommodations?
- Are strong scents or irritants present in the service environment (e.g., cleaning products, air fresheners, adhesives, paints)?
- Is the lighting adjustable to accommodate sensory preferences and needs (e.g., dimmable lights, avoidance of flickering sources)?
- Are there sources of unexpected or sustained noise that could cause stress or sensory overload (e.g., cleaning equipment, construction)?

- Can the temperature and air quality be controlled or adjusted for individual comfort?

#### 4.6.2.3.2 Examples of environmental barriers

- Air quality and chemical sensitivities
  - Scented air fresheners, soaps, or sanitizers used in shared service areas.
    - Use of cleaning agents, adhesives, paints, or furnishings that emit strong scents or chemical vapours.
    - Use of perfumes and other personal products that contain fragrance chemicals.
- Lighting conditions
  - Harsh, flickering, or non-adjustable fluorescent lighting in service areas.
  - Lack of task lighting or dimmable options for users with low vision or light sensitivity.
- Noise and disruptive sounds
  - Loud or high-decibel activities conducted without warning or scheduling considerations (e.g., vacuuming, floor cleaning, construction).
  - High background noise (e.g., open-plan layouts, echo-prone rooms) that impair concentration or communication.
- Temperature and physical environment
  - Inflexible temperature settings that cause discomfort for individuals with heat or cold sensitivity.
  - Lack of control over airflow or ventilation in consultation or meeting spaces.

- Surface textures and finishes
  - Chairs or furnishings with sticky, sharp, or abrasive materials that may be uncomfortable for users with tactile sensitivities.
  - High-gloss or reflective surfaces that cause visual glare and discomfort.

#### **4.6.2.4 Technological barriers**

Technological barriers occur when digital tools, platforms, or systems are not compatible with assistive technologies or do not conform to recognized accessibility standards. These barriers can prevent individuals from accessing, navigating, or fully participating in the digital aspects of the service experience. Technological barriers negatively impact people with disabilities.

##### **4.6.2.4.1 Questions to ask yourself**

- Is the service delivered using digital tools, platforms, or systems that are:
  - compatible with assistive technology such as screen readers, voice recognition software, or alternative input devices?
  - designed with accessible navigation, structure, and accessible formats and features (e.g., described video, captions, transcripts)?
- Do all digital components of the service conform to recognized ICT accessibility standards (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#))?
- Are virtual meetings, webinars, or presentations accessible in real time or are the recordings of these meetings accessible when they are made available after events?
- Are electronic documents (e.g., training materials, reports, instructions) created in accessible formats?

- Are digital support services (e.g., helpdesks, troubleshooting guides) accessible to users with disabilities?

#### 4.6.2.4.2 Examples of technological barriers

- Digital tools and platforms
  - Web-based services are not compatible with screen readers, voice commands, or offer keyboard-only navigation.
  - Applications that lack adjustable settings for text size, contrast, or zoom.
  - Interfaces without accessible menus, headings, or logical reading order.
- Document accessibility
  - PDFs or Word documents without structured formatting (e.g., missing titles, headings, styles, or alt text). Scanned documents or images of text that are not machine-readable by assistive technologies.
- Virtual meetings and presentations
  - Lack of live captioning or real-time transcription during online meetings or webinars.
  - Platforms that do not support assistive technology or offer inadequate accessibility features.
  - Presentations using inaccessible visuals (e.g., small fonts, poor colour contrast, or images without alt text or descriptions).
- Technical support services
  - Limited accessibility options for troubleshooting (e.g., no chat, email, or text-based support).
  - FAQs, support documents, or help guides that are not screen reader-friendly or written in plain language.

#### **4.6.2.5 Attitudinal and organizational barriers**

Attitudinal and organizational barriers can also affect how accessibility is addressed during the development of procurement specifications. These barriers may be the result of a pre-existing bias or an organizational practice. These barriers have the potential to limit how accessibility requirements are identified, defined, or prioritized.

Recognizing and addressing these influences supports more inclusive outcomes and aligns with accessibility obligations under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

#### **4.6.2.6 Attitudinal barriers**

Attitudinal barriers result from a lack of awareness, understanding, or training that reinforce stereotypes, biases, or misconceptions about disability and accessibility. These barriers can influence procurement decisions because we make assumptions about end users and undervalue the importance of delivering accessible services. An attitudinal barrier can negatively impact all people with disabilities.

##### **4.6.2.6.1 Questions to ask yourself**

- Are assumptions being made about what accessibility considerations entail (e.g., only considering mobility-related requirements)?
- Are accessibility features, such as screen-reader-compatible platforms, plain language communication, or sign language interpretation, perceived as unnecessary or beyond the scope of the service requirements?
- Do business owners have sufficient knowledge of accessible service design and delivery?

#### **4.6.2.6.2 Examples of attitudinal barriers**

- Assumptions about user experiences:
  - Assuming accessibility only applies to physical access.
  - Believing accessible services are only needed when requested.
  - Discounting feedback from people with disabilities on service usability.

#### **4.6.2.7 Organizational barriers**

Organizational barriers refer to policies, practices and norms that exist within the organization that exclude people with disabilities.

##### **4.6.2.7.1 Questions to ask yourself**

- Are there internal defaults (e.g., file formats, communication channels) that could create barriers?
- Does a procurement practice exclude certain businesses from participating? For example: A short timeline to respond to and submit a bid might discriminate against a business owned by a person with a disability who needs more time.

##### **4.6.2.7.2 Examples of organizational barriers in services**

- Established procurement practices and protocols.
- Internal templates for presentations, training, or outreach that do not require the use of plain language, high contrast visuals, or alternative formats. For example, service-related documentation requirements may mandate the use of inaccessible formats (e.g., PDFs without accessible tagging).
- Procurement policies and templates that exclude accessibility:
  - No requirement to include accessibility in service specifications.

- Standard templates that default to inaccessible formats or omit sections that prompt users to include accessibility requirements for services.

### 4.6.3 Helpful resources

- Take the [Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA Plus\) course](#) to learn how various identity and social factors can influence how different people experience federal government initiatives.
- Consult the Digital Accessibility Toolkit webpage [Designing accessible services](#) to learn how to design for different disabilities.
- Read [CAN/ASC-3.1: Plain Language](#) standard to learn about plain language.
- Read [CAN/ASC-5.2.1: Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery- Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the Accessible Canada Act](#) standard to learn additional information on addressing barriers and delivering accessible services.

### 4.6.4 Step 2 outcome

After completing step 2, you should have a clear understanding of the end user's experience and the potential barriers they may encounter. This supports the development of accessibility requirements that help to prevent or remove those barriers. The key outcome is a documented accessibility barrier assessment based on end user needs, service context, and consultation. Section [5.1.2](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring a training service.

## 4.7 Step 3: Gather information

Step 3 builds on the findings from step 2 by using the barriers identified in step 2 to gather information to develop accessibility requirements for the service. This can include:

- Applicable accessibility standards, guidelines and best practices.
- Understanding market capacity to deliver services that include accessibility features (depending on the scope of the procurement).

### 4.7.1 Objective

The objective of step 3 is to collect and evaluate the information needed to develop accessibility requirements to include in the procurement specifications.

### 4.7.2 Questions to ask yourself when gathering information

The following questions aim to assist in gathering the necessary information to define accessibility requirements for the service. While not all questions may be applicable in every scenario, they serve as a useful framework for ensuring accessibility is integrated into the procurement process.

- What aspects of the service can include accessibility requirements?  
Consider the full scope of the service, such as:
  - Service delivery channels (e.g., in-person, virtual, hybrid).
  - Service delivery methods (e.g., availability of interpreters, captioning, accessible platforms).
  - Training and facilitation (e.g., use of plain language, diverse formats, multimodal presentation methods).

- Digital tools or platforms used (e.g., virtual meeting tools, client portals, helpdesk systems).
- Reports, emails, and written deliverables (e.g., structured formatting, accessible digital formats, plain language).
- Presentation materials (e.g., slide decks, visuals, use of alt text, font readability, colour contrast).
- Will you need to conduct user testing to ensure that the service and its deliverables are accessible?
  - If yes, how will testing be structured?
  - Will people with disabilities be involved in user testing?
- Are there accessibility conformance reports from the vendor?
  - Can the vendor demonstrate experience delivering accessible services?
  - Have any third-party audits or certifications been completed?
- Are there national or international accessibility standards, guidelines, or best practices you can apply when developing requirements for the service (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#))?
  - If yes, who will conduct the accessibility conformance testing (for example, a technical specialist within your organization, or will you need to contract with a third party to provide this expertise)?
- What is the market capacity to deliver services that meet the accessibility requirements and standards you have identified?
- Are there existing services that meet accessibility standards, or will custom modifications be required?
- Have you considered how much time is required to evaluate bid submissions and the resulting deliverables?

## 4.7.3 Helpful resources

- [Guideline on Making Information Technology Usable by All](#)
- [ICT accessibility requirements wizard](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
  - [Accessible virtual events](#)
  - [Create document](#)
  - [Guide for Including Accessibility in Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\) Related Procurement](#)
- [Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations – Consulting persons with disabilities](#)
- [Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings](#)
- [CAN/ASC-5.2.1: Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery- Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the \*Accessible Canada Act\*](#)

To learn more about writing in plain language, please consult the following resources:

- [Writing resources - plain language](#)
- [CAN/ASC-3.1: Plain Language](#)

## 4.7.4 Step 3 outcome

After completing step 3, you should have gathered sufficient information to develop accessibility requirements that align with recognized standards and reflect what is available in the market. The key outcome is a summary of relevant accessibility standards, research related to both the service and its delivery, and supplier input. Section [5.1.3](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring a training service.

## 4.8 Step 4: Develop procurement requirements

Step 4 builds on step 3 by using the validated standards, market research, and supplier input gathered to define clear and enforceable procurement requirements. This ensures accessibility is integrated into the specifications for the procurement, evaluation criteria, and resulting contract terms.

### 4.8.1 Objective

This step focuses on defining measurable compliance requirements, verifying accessibility claims, and securing long-term supplier commitments. By developing clear requirements, a procurement process is created that drives accessibility innovation, reduces barriers, and ensures that the service meets the needs of all end users, including people with disabilities.

### 4.8.2 Questions to ask yourself

These guiding questions help refine and finalize accessibility requirements to ensure they are enforceable and integrated throughout the procurement process. While not every question will apply in all cases, considering these aspects will help establish clear expectations and accountability for accessible procurement.

- Is it expected that the accessibility standards identified in step 3 will change throughout the duration of the contract?
  - If yes, should the contract require the supplier to comply with updated or revised accessibility standards?
    - If yes, would an amendment to the contract be needed to support these changes?

- How will it be confirmed that the service meets the accessibility requirements?
  - When will it be confirmed that the service meets the accessibility requirements (e.g., at delivery, periodically, or throughout the contract)?
- If testing is planned, have any user or accessibility testing requirements been included?
  - Will user testing that includes people with disabilities be conducted?
  - Will accessibility conformance testing be conducted?
- How should suppliers demonstrate their compliance with the accessibility requirements?
  - Should they provide certifications, conformance reports, or accessibility roadmaps?
  - If requirements are included, will they be evaluated as part of the solicitation process?
    - If yes, will accessibility requirements be mandatory or point rated technical evaluation criteria, or both?
- Has plain language been used to describe the requirements?
- Based on the results of the market analysis, are there suppliers who are able meet the accessibility requirements or standards?
- If accessibility cannot be fully achieved at the time of bid closing, should the requirements include flexibility for implementing accessibility features in phases over time?

## 4.8.3 Develop accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria

Building on steps 1 through 3, this section converts identified needs into enforceable accessibility requirements to include in your SOW or SOR. It also provides you with guidance for the development of evaluation criteria for the solicitation process.

### 4.8.3.1 Resulting accessibility requirements

Accessibility requirements should include minimum compliance expectations as well as any value-added features that enhance inclusive use. Key areas may include:

- Compliance with recognized standards
  - Requirements should reference specific accessibility standards and guidelines identified in step 3 (e.g., [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for deliverables relating to information and communication technology, [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#) for deliverables relating to the physical or built environment).
  - Ensure that the contract includes clauses requiring the supplier to maintain compliance with accessibility standards over the duration of the contract.
- Implementation roadmap
  - If full compliance with accessibility requirements cannot be achieved at bid closing, the resulting contractor must provide a roadmap, plan, or timeline showing how compliance will be achieved during the contract period.

- User interface and interaction methods
  - If digital platforms or tools are part of the service or its delivery, they should support assistive technologies and meet digital accessibility standards.
- Multimodal learning and communication options
  - If the service includes training, this should be available in multiple accessible formats, such as plain language, large print, captions, transcripts, audio description, or tactile formats.
- User testing and feedback integration
  - Where appropriate, requirements may include usability testing with people with disabilities during development or delivery of the service.
  - Ensure the contract includes requirements to integrate and respond to feedback obtained from user testing.
- Responding to accessibility issues
  - Include requirements for the supplier to respond to and resolve end users' accessibility complaints within the contract period. This may require the supplier to implement a feedback mechanism to:
    - receive reports of accessibility issues from end-users;
    - resolve reported accessibility issues; and
    - inform the procurement lead of all reported accessibility issues and their resolution.

### 4.8.3.2 Evaluation criteria

Accessibility should be reflected in mandatory and point-rated evaluation criteria. These may include:

- Mandatory requirements, which could include:
  - Demonstrating compliance with minimum accessibility requirements.
  - Providing evidence of how their proposed service meets the standards and requirements identified in step 3.
- Point-rated criteria, which could include awarding points for:
  - Features or approaches that exceed minimum accessibility requirements.
  - Demonstrated experience delivering accessible services.
- Evaluation process, which could include:
  - Determining whether to conduct user testing with people with disabilities or accessibility conformance testing, or both.

While this section focuses on defining requirements and evaluation criteria, additional accessibility considerations may be included and are covered in Section [4.8.4 Other Considerations](#).

### 4.8.4 Other considerations

- Review and assess the contracted deliverables to ensure they meet the accessibility requirements specified in the resulting contract.
- Develop a budget to include accessibility conformance testing, end-user testing, and other validation requirements (if applicable) into the project plan.

- Consider including a clause in the solicitation to allow bidders to propose improvements to the accessibility requirements during the solicitation process.
- Ensure that solicitation documents are written in plain language and make them available in accessible formats.
- If the supplier is required to work on-site at Canada's location, ensure the work site (location, parking, workstation, etc.) is accessible.
- Ensure that any virtual or in-person industry engagement activities (e.g., industry days, one-on-one meetings) are accessible.
- Determine accommodation requirements for mandatory site visits.

### **4.8.5 Step 4 outcome**

After completing step 4, you should have a finalized set of accessibility specifications that ensure accessibility is maintained throughout the contract lifecycle. Section [5.1.4](#) illustrates this step in the context of procuring a training service.

## **4.9 Justifying the absence of accessibility requirements**

Business owners should always begin the planning process assuming that accessibility applies to their service. While it may not always be possible to include accessibility requirements in a procurement, excluding accessibility requirements should be the exception, not the norm. A decision to exclude requirements for accessibility should be taken only after analysis and consultation.

When requirements for accessibility are excluded from the specifications for a procurement, the business owner must explain the rationale for this decision. This is currently a mandatory requirement in the context of Government of Canada procurement in accordance with clauses 4.2.7.1 and 4.2.7.1.1 of the [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#).

This justification should demonstrate that the business owner has:

- assessed the service for potential accessibility barriers and impacts on people with disabilities;
- researched applicable accessibility standards and best practices;
- consulted with people with disabilities and accessibility experts;
- engaged the market to explore the feasibility of including accessibility requirements;
- considered alternative ways to enhance accessibility even if requirements are not included;
- assessed the risks and implications of not addressing accessibility, such as legal, financial, reputational, and human rights risks; and
- developed a plan to address accessibility barriers through other means such as training, support services, or complementary initiatives.

Procurement leads should work closely with their business owners to ensure they explore opportunities to incorporate accessibility. The procurement lead ensures that the written justification is kept in the procurement file.

# 5 Scenario

## 5.1 Procuring a training service: Applying the four-step process

Your organization needs to procure the services of a consultant to design and deliver a mandatory training program on digital security and privacy for its employees. To ensure compliance with the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and relevant accessibility standards, you apply the four-step process outlined in this guide to embed accessibility throughout the procurement lifecycle.

This scenario is provided for illustrative purposes only. Accessibility must be considered for each procurement.

### 5.1.1 Step 1: Define your requirements

This step aligns with the guidance in Section [4.5](#) step 1 and illustrates how the principles identified in this step are applied in practice within this scenario.

You begin by identifying the requirements of the training service, including the expected deliverables, format, target audience, and delivery methods. The training is to be delivered both virtually and in-person and must be accessible to all employees, including employees with disabilities.

#### 5.1.1.1 Understanding end user interactions

- Employees, including employees with disabilities, may engage with the service through live presentations, e-learning modules, handouts, and support resources.

### 5.1.1.2 Accessibility-related requirements

**Note:** Accessibility-related requirements are included at this stage to ensure accessibility is embedded from the outset as a core aspect of how the service must function. Identifying them early helps shape service expectations, inform specifications, and ensure equitable access for all end users, including people with disabilities.

- **Delivery format:** Support for live captions, sign language interpretation, screen reader-compatible platforms, and accessible documents.
- **Instructional materials:** Plain language summaries, structured slide decks, high-contrast visuals, audio-described videos, and accessible PDFs.
- **Interaction:** Ability for users to ask questions in multiple ways (e.g., chat, audio, written), compatibility with screen readers, keyboard navigation.
- **Physical environment:** Accessible training locations (e.g., ramps, elevators, seating, signage, adjustable lighting and sound) where in-person delivery is required.
- **Support services:** Accessible helpdesk support, plain-language guidance for joining virtual sessions, and flexible scheduling.
- **Conformance:** Alignment with accessibility standards such as:
  - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for all information and communication technology related components.
  - [CAN/ASC-1.1-Employment:2024 \(REV2025\)](#) for employment related services.
  - [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) for communication.

- [CAN/ASC-5.2.1: Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery- Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the Accessible Canada Act](#) for service delivery.
- [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#) for physical environments, as applicable.

The outcome of step 1 is a documented description of the training service, how it will be delivered, who will use it, and any associated platforms, materials, or support functions (indirect deliverables).

## **5.1.2 Step 2: Identify barriers that end users may experience**

This aligns with the guidance in Section [4.6](#) step 2 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

To assess potential accessibility barriers, you should consult with:

- Employees from various departments who have participated in past training sessions.
- Employees with disabilities.
- Internal accessibility specialists.
- Human resources and learning and development staff.
- External accessibility consultants and advocacy organizations.

### **5.1.2.1 Assessment of identified barriers**

#### **5.1.2.1.1 Physical barriers**

- Inaccessible in-person training locations.
- Lack of adjustable seating or accessible presentation equipment.

#### **5.1.2.1.2 Communication barriers**

- Complex or technical language used without plain-language alternatives.
- Lack of captions or transcripts for videos.
- No real-time interpretation or alternative means of interaction during sessions.
- Instructional emails that are poorly structured or inaccessible.
- Printed handouts not available in alternate formats.

#### **5.1.2.1.3 Environmental barriers**

- Harsh lighting or background noise during in-person sessions.
- Use of fragrances or materials that trigger chemical sensitivities.
- Distracting visual elements (e.g., flashing animations, fast transitions in slides).

#### **5.1.2.1.4 Technological barriers**

- Virtual platform not compatible with assistive technologies.
- No keyboard navigation or screen reader support.
- Slide decks not tagged or logically structured.
- PDFs that are scanned images instead of accessible text.
- No alternative text for graphics.

The outcome of step 2 is a barrier assessment that identifies potential challenges users may face during the delivery and use of the service, including physical, communication, environmental, and technological barriers.

### 5.1.3 Step 3: Gather information

At this stage, you will collect the information needed to develop specific accessibility requirements for the training service. This step aligns with the guidance in Section [4.7](#) step 3 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

#### To support this process:

- Review relevant accessibility standards, including:
  - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024-Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#) for all information and communication technology related components.
  - [CAN/ASC-1.1-Employment:2024 \(REV2025\)](#) for employment related services.
  - [CAN/ASC-3.1-Plain Language](#) for communication.
  - [CAN/ASC-5.2.1: Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery- Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the \*Accessible Canada Act\*](#) for service delivery.
  - [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#) for physical environments, as applicable.
- Consult subject matter experts to identify best practices in accessible training delivery.
- Review other procurements that included accessible learning or communication services.
- Issue a Request for Information (RFI) to understand the market's capacity to deliver accessible training.
- Collect documentation and sample materials (e.g., slide decks, videos, demo portals, Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPATs) or Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs)).

- Consult people with disabilities and training participants to assess barriers in current or past training formats.

**During this process validate:**

- the availability of captioning, transcripts, accessible slide decks, and plain language summaries;
- the compatibility of virtual platforms with screen readers and keyboard navigation;
- the support for flexible communication formats (e.g., chat, Q&A, recorded sessions);
- the supplier capacity to modify content based on user feedback; and
- whether accessibility features can be delivered at the outset or require a phased approach.

The outcome of step 3 is a summary of relevant standards, market capacity, and supplier capabilities that will inform the development of accessibility requirements to include in the specifications for the procurement.

## **5.1.4 Step 4: Develop procurement requirements**

Based on the information gathered in steps 1 through 3, you develop a clear and enforceable set of accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria. This aligns with the guidance in Section [4.8](#) step 4 and illustrates how those principles are applied in practice within this scenario.

The accessibility requirements are structured around the following key areas:

- Compliance with standards (e.g., CAN/ASC – EN 301 549:2024).
- Accessible content formats (e.g., plain language, tagged PDFs, captioned videos).

- Inclusive delivery options (e.g., sign language interpretation, keyboard navigation, multilingual support).
- User testing (e.g., involvement of people with disabilities during content review).

These categories are supported by detailed technical specifications:

#### **5.1.4.1 Physical requirements for in-person delivery**

- Physically accessible training locations (e.g., ramps, elevators, wide doorways, accessible restrooms, height-adjustable podiums).
- Microphones, visual aids, or presentation devices from seated or standing positions to support presenters.

#### **5.1.4.2 Communication requirements**

- Materials in plain language, structured formats, and multiple media (text, audio, visual).
- Captioning, transcripts, and interpretation for all recorded/live sessions.
- Documents provided in accessible formats (e.g., tagged PDFs, large print).

#### **5.1.4.3 Environmental requirements**

- Training spaces that provide accommodations for sensory sensitivities (e.g., scent-free policies, reduced noise, adjustable lighting).
- Virtual backgrounds or slide designs that avoid flashing, fast motion, or patterns that trigger migraines or seizures.
- Virtual sessions that allow users to reduce or mute non-essential visual or audio elements.

#### 5.1.4.4 Technological requirements

- Virtual platforms that support screen readers and keyboard-only navigation.
- Digital interfaces that conform to [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#).
- Audio and video that supports captioning and audio description

#### 5.1.4.5 Evaluation criteria

- **Mandatory requirements:** Bidders must demonstrate compliance with accessibility standards, submit an ACR or equivalent, and provide examples of accessible training materials.
- **Point-rated criteria:** Additional points awarded for inclusive design practices, and user-centered testing processes.
- **Implementation roadmap:** If not all requirements can be met at contract award, suppliers must submit a timeline to achieve full compliance.

#### 5.1.4.6 Other considerations

- Contract includes clauses requiring the supplier to maintain conformance with evolving accessibility standards over the contract period.
- The contract includes a feedback mechanism for end users to report accessibility issues and ensure a process for resolution.
- Budget is allocated for accessibility audits and end user testing during delivery.

The outcome of step 4 is a finalized set of accessibility specifications, evaluation criteria, and contract clauses that ensure accessibility is maintained throughout the contract lifecycle.

## 5.1.5 Outcome

By applying the four-step process, you procure a training service that is inclusive, accessible, and effective for all employees, including those with disabilities.

# 6 Annex A – Accessibility procurement checklist

This checklist supports the application of the four-step process described in the guide. It is designed to help you document due diligence and ensure accessibility is considered throughout the procurement lifecycle.

This checklist should be used in conjunction with the full guide. Referring to the checklist alone does not replace the need for thoughtful engagement with the guidance and scenario presented in each step throughout Sections 4 and 5. Effective integration of accessibility requires a comprehensive understanding of the process outlined throughout the document.

While this checklist provides a strong foundation, it is not exhaustive. Additional or modified checklist items may be necessary depending on the nature and complexity of the service being procured.

## 6.1 Step 1: Define your requirements

- Have you clearly defined the purpose of the direct deliverable?
- Have you identified the end users, including people with disabilities?
- Have you documented how end users will access or interact with the service (e.g., in-person, virtual, written)?
- Have you considered indirect deliverables (e.g., reports, training materials, digital tools)?
- Have you considered the context of service delivery (e.g., accessibility of physical spaces or digital platforms)?
- Have you documented any assumptions or limitations related to end user diversity or accessibility needs?
- Have you considered future or evolving accessibility needs (e.g., user groups, technology updates)?

## 6.2 Step 2: Identify barriers

- Have you conducted a barrier assessment across the following types:
  - Physical (e.g., training room setup, seating).
  - Communication (e.g., language, formats, interaction modes).
  - Environmental (e.g., noise, lighting, sensory triggers).
  - Technological (e.g., digital platforms, virtual tools).
  - Attitudinal (e.g., trainer assumptions, accessibility stigma).
  - Organizational (e.g., lack of internal guidance or coordination).
- Have you consulted with end users including people with disabilities or organizations representing them?
- Have you consulted relevant internal staff (e.g., IT, HR, program leads) about service access or delivery barriers?
- Have you reviewed how similar services have performed from an accessibility perspective?
- Have you documented how each identified barrier could affect end users and possible strategies to address them?

## 6.3 Step 3: Gather information

- Have you reviewed applicable accessibility standards and best practices, such as:
    - [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#)
    - [CSA/ASC B651:23 Accessible design for the built environment](#)
- Have you engaged subject matter experts to understand market capacity?

- Have you issued a request for Information (RFI) or other market-sounding tools to gather supplier input on accessibility?
- Have you obtained or reviewed Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs), VPATs, or sample deliverables?
- Have you verified whether service delivery methods (e.g., virtual platforms, documents, helpdesk) are accessible?
- Have you assessed whether support materials (e.g., reports, guidance, presentation decks) will be available in accessible formats?
- Have you considered whether certain accessibility features can be phased in or customized during delivery?

## **6.4 Step 4: Develop final accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria**

- Have you developed specific, measurable and enforceable accessibility requirements that will address the identified needs and barriers?
- Have you organized accessibility requirements by relevant barrier types (e.g., communication, technological, environmental)?
- Have you developed evaluation criteria that assess accessibility, including:
  - mandatory compliance with standards and formats;
  - point-rated features exceeding minimum requirements; and
  - demonstrated inclusive design practices or user testing?
- Have you included contract clauses that require:
  - ongoing conformance with current accessibility standards;
  - feedback mechanisms for end users to report accessibility issues and requirements for contractors to remediate; and

- accessibility training or onboarding for client-facing staff?
- Have you ensured that bid evaluation team understands how to assess accessibility-related responses provided by bidders?
- Have you planned for how accessibility performance will be monitored, audited, or improved during the contract period?

## 6.5 If accessibility requirements are not included

- Have you prepared a written justification explaining why accessibility requirements are not applicable to the service?
- Does the justification include steps taken to evaluate applicability, such as:
  - Consultation with users or disability stakeholders?
  - Review of applicable standards and best practices?
  - Market research or engagement with potential service providers?
- Have you documented any associated risks (e.g. operational, reputational) of excluding accessibility?
- Have you considered alternative ways to enhance accessibility?
- Have you developed a plan to address accessibility barriers through other means such as training, support services, or complementary initiatives?
- Has the justification been reviewed and approved by procurement officials, senior management, or those with the authority to approve purchases, and is it retained in the procurement file?

**Note:** This Section applies only in cases where accessibility requirements are not included. See Section [4.9](#) of this guide.

For more information, or for alternative formats, contact:

Accessibility Standards Canada  
320 St-Joseph Boulevard, Suite 246  
Gatineau, QC J8Y 3Y8  
1-833-854-7628

[accessible.canada.ca](https://accessible.canada.ca)

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# MEMO

**TO:** Accessibility, Inclusive, Diversity and Equity Committee

**FROM:** Mallory Klooster, Manager, Community Well-Being

**DATE:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025

**RE:** **Accessible Playground Update**

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The internal playground committee has now finalized the proposed budget for the Accessible Playground project, which includes the installation of accessible play equipment as well as the construction of a new building with fully accessible offices and washrooms.

As part of our planning process, we will be applying for a Planning Assistance Grant to hire a landscape architect. This professional will develop a comprehensive report that includes conceptual drawings of the overall site layout and assesses the feasibility of various design options. This step will help ensure that the project is both practical and aligned with our long-term vision for accessibility and inclusion.

The committee has carefully reviewed the requirements for the project, and we are confident that we can provide a comprehensive solution that will meet the needs of all users, ensuring both inclusivity and functionality.

We have identified several relevant grants that could provide funding to support this initiative. These grants cover a variety of needs, from accessible play equipment to building renovations, and we plan to apply for as many as possible to secure the necessary resources for the project's completion.