

Office of the Auditor General of Canada

# 2023 Annual Progress Report on the OAG Accessibility Plan 2022–25



Office of the  
Auditor General  
of Canada

Bureau du  
vérificateur général  
du Canada

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Auditor General of Canada, 2023.

Cat. No. FA1-33E-PDF  
ISSN 2817-0865

# Table of Contents

- General** ..... 1
- Executive Summary** .....2
- Main Achievements in 2023** .....2
- Progress to Date** .....3
  - Employment ..... 3
  - Built environment..... 5
  - Information and communication technologies (ICT) ..... 7
  - Communication, other than ICT..... 8
  - Procurement of goods, services, and facilities ..... 9
- What More We Did**.....10
- Consultations**.....10
  - Redesigning workspaces and implementing GCworkplace..... 10
  - Consultations linked to the Employment priority area for action ..... 11
  - Ongoing dialogue with the Accessibility Working Group responsible for implementing the plan and with the Accessibility Network of Employees ..... 11
- Feedback** .....12
- What We Learned From 2023** .....12
- Glossary** ..... 13

## General



Karen Hogan, FCPA,  
Auditor General of Canada

The OAG Accessibility Plan 2022–25 was published on 19 December 2022 and provides an overview of our mandate, our accessibility initiatives, and our commitments to removing and preventing barriers to access over 3 years.

This report details the progress made during the first year of the plan’s deployment, from 1 January to 31 December 2023. It was prepared by the Senior Policy Analyst for Accessibility on behalf of the OAG.

Employees with disabilities and allies who are members of the OAG’s Accessibility Network of Employees were consulted in the preparation of this report, as were the Ombuds; the Chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Group; the internal Accessibility Working Group; and the People Management Committee. The Accessibility Network of Employees consists of employees with disabilities who have self-identified and allies with an interest in matters related to accessibility.

## Executive Summary

This report focuses on 5 priority areas for action and on their associated goals:

- **Employment**
  - **Goal**—Promote the development of human resource practices that are accessible and inclusive so that all employees, including persons with disabilities, are supported and able to contribute to the OAG.
- **Built environment**
  - **Goal**—Ensure barrier-free access and use of the physical environment for OAG employees and visitors.
- **Information and communication technologies (ICT)**
  - **Goal**—Ensure that the tools, software, and documents used by employees to fulfill their responsibilities are accessible by default.
- **Communications (other than ICT)**
  - **Goal**—Produce accessible communication products and activities.
- **Procurement of goods, services, and facilities**
  - **Goal**—Ensure that accessibility requirements are considered by both business owners and contracting authorities when purchasing goods and services, and that, where applicable, accessibility requirements inform the technical specifications incorporated in procurement documents.

While the OAG does not have responsibilities in the area of transportation, we have committed to exploring options for accessible parking and wayfinding systems under “the built environment.” Similarly, while we do not design and deliver programs or services directly to Canadians, we intend to make our audit work more accessible to our public stakeholders. We have addressed this commitment under “communication, other than ICT”. Progress in the 5 priority areas for action is described in more detail in the “Progress to date” section of this report.

## Main Achievements in 2023

- A senior policy analyst responsible for accessibility has been in place since 4 July 2023.
- The Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport was launched at the OAG on 27 June 2023.
- Consultations related to our modernized physical workspaces took place, and we have an ongoing feedback-gathering mechanism.
- New and existing accessibility features of our workplace were promoted during the 2023 National AccessAbility Week.
- Alternative and electronic formats of recent reports and publications are available, and standards for their use are on our website.

- Interpretation services were provided during the 2023 National AccessAbility Week, and a contract for ongoing services is underway.
- A consistent open dialogue was maintained with our Accessibility Network of Employees throughout 2023.

Progress in the 5 priority areas for action is described in more detail in the next section.

## Progress to Date

A goal and objectives were determined for each of the plan's priority areas for action. This report lists the activities that are completed or are in progress based on the initial planning timelines.

### Employment



**Goal**—Promote the development of human resource practices that are accessible and inclusive so that all employees, including persons with disabilities, are supported and able to contribute to the OAG.

**Objective 1**—Develop and support accessible employment practices.

#### Completed

- Modernize the self-identification questionnaire, tools, and data-collection process, and use the data collected to plan the OAG's human resource management to support a diverse and inclusive workforce.
  - The OAG adopted the self-identification questionnaire developed by the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. Employees are now able to access the questionnaire directly within our human resource system to view or update their employment equity information. It eliminated the use of non-accessible PDFs. Changes were completed in January 2023. The disaggregated data collected increases the OAG's ability to complete more detailed reporting and analysis on the make-up of our workforce.
- Examine the new learning management system, and ensure that it meets the requirements of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
  - A new learning management system that meets the guidelines was launched on 20 September 2023.

#### In progress

- Develop and implement an equity, diversity, and inclusion plan.
  - The Auditor General approved the first OAG Diversity and Inclusion Plan on 30 November 2023. The plan includes actions to increase representation and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

- Develop a new dashboard that supports the timely monitoring of progress toward achieving representation of various groups in the levels and areas of work across the OAG using disaggregated data.
  - This action will be completed in March 2024.
- Launch an accessible format of the online version of the corporate onboarding program.
  - The theme of the new onboarding program is “Making the Connections.” It invites new employees to a warm, connected team environment while providing one-stop convenience for onboarding.
- Support the participation of persons with disabilities in leadership development programs and career development services.
  - OAG employees participated in the Executive Leadership Program and the second cohort of the Mosaic Leadership Development Program launched by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. To ensure confidentiality, the number of persons with disabilities cannot be communicated.
- Consult persons with disabilities in the development of employment-related policy instruments and tools.
  - Consultations took place in March 2023 on the 2023–26 Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

**Objective 2**—Improve efficiency in the provision of adapted equipment and accommodation.

### **Completed**

- Implement and support the [Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport](#) for OAG employees and candidates.
  - The OAG introduced the tool on 27 June 2023 by email and by publishing information on our INTRAnet. Information sessions took place on September 19 and 21 to answer questions about its use. Furthermore, the OAG began including passport information in each appointment letter of offer since 12 June 2023.
- Create a list of accommodations, including assistive-technology options, available to employees in collaboration with accessibility, accommodation, and adaptive computer technology, and educate managers on what accommodations are available.
  - Completed on 20 December 2023.

### **In progress**

- Provide persons with disabilities with adapted equipment and accommodations on a timely basis.
  - To date, 27 ergonomic assessments have been conducted. Several of these requests came from persons with disabilities. The ergonomist meets the employee within 5 working days after the medical note is provided, and the equipment requested in the ergonomic report is received within 16 weeks at the most.

**Objective 3**—Support persons with disabilities in developing their talent, and ensure that people with disabilities are retained as talented employees.

### Completed

- Hire an accessibility coordinator.
  - A senior policy analyst responsible for accessibility has been in place since 4 July 2023.

### In progress

- Appoint persons with disabilities to and within the OAG management group through career development and talent management.
  - During the 2022–23 fiscal year, 150 employees were promoted across the office at all levels. Of these promotions, 12 were employees who self-identified as persons with disabilities (8.0%). The number of promotions for persons with disabilities in management-level positions remains too low to be reported while maintaining confidentiality. During the 2022–23 fiscal year, the OAG exceeded its target of increasing the representation of persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities within the executive group by 25%. The target of increasing representation at the executive level by another 25% for 2023–24 is on track.
- Review existing development programs to ensure that persons with disabilities are represented and supported at each stage, from entry to exit.
  - The ASG/ASG-IT Development Fund primarily supports the OAG’s Audit Services Group (ASG) and ASG-IT (Information Technology) employees in their pursuit of advanced academic studies. We can confirm the participation of persons with disabilities in the ASG/ASG-IT Development Fund; however, we cannot disclose the number of participants with disabilities to protect their personal information and privacy.

## Built environment



**Goal**—Ensure barrier-free access and use of the physical environment for OAG employees and visitors.

**Objective 1**—Build, renovate, or retrofit all physical OAG offices according to the latest accessibility standards, best practices, and information from persons with disabilities.

### In progress

- Conduct employee surveys and gather feedback to use as a guide to prioritize future improvements in the physical workspace.
  - Consultation sessions were held in December 2022 and May 2023. Feedback provided via a dedicated email address led to enhancements of the temporary office space.
- Review the physical workspace in consultation with persons with disabilities (employees, visitors, and other people who regularly conduct business in the buildings) to identify how it could be configured to be more accessible and inclusive.
  - Ongoing feedback is received via the dedicated generic mailbox and during information sessions.



- Consult persons with disabilities on the physical workspace, and prepare or revise the policies, directives, and guidance (such as the re-entry handbooks, reservation system procedures, threat and risk assessments, and health and safety assessments) according to their needs.
  - Adjustments to the reservation system procedures were made following feedback received from persons with disabilities via a dedicated email address and information sessions. Also, a new evacuation protocol was introduced to address the needs of people who may require assistance during emergencies. Lastly, specialized workspaces were allocated to those requiring them.
- Ensure that employees and visitors, including persons with disabilities, know how to provide feedback on the built environment.
  - Information about the renovations is disseminated through various Microsoft Teams channels and the INTRAnet, and feedback is provided back to the project team via a dedicated email address.
- Collaborate with landlords and building management to ensure that accessible parking spaces are available for employees and visitors who need them.
  - The OAG is partnering with building management to ensure accessible parking is available for employees and visitors in need in or near all OAG office locations. Accessible parking is available at or near all OAG offices.
- Explore digital wayfinding applications for mobile devices to help people to find our offices from public transit, taxi stands, and parking areas and to help them to navigate once they are inside the building.
  - The C.D. Howe building in Ottawa integrates the use of the GoodMaps wayfinding navigation application.

**Objective 2**—Ensure that all employees and visitors have a safe environment to work in.

### **In progress**

- Consult persons with disabilities to develop, prepare, or revise emergency evacuation plans according to their needs.
  - In March 2023, a self-declaration form was introduced for people who may require assistance during an emergency in any of the OAG locations.
- Promote accessibility features within the OAG’s workspace and the surrounding building space (such as digital signage, wayfinding indicators, technological beacons, hands-free door openers, wheelchair-accessible circulation paths, and accessible washroom features) to employees and visitors as the features are implemented.
  - Accessibility features within OAG offices and buildings were promoted during 2023 National AccessAbility Week. Documentation describing the purpose of an accessible built environment was also prepared.

## Information and communication technologies (ICT)



**Goal**—Ensure that the tools, software, and documents used by employees to fulfill their responsibilities are accessible by default.

**Objective 1**—Assess, document, and report on known barriers in existing ICT.

### In progress

- Create a robust accessibility testing, reporting, and monitoring strategy, and establish governance to support its implementation.
  - Work on an accessibility testing strategy, with focus on identifying required templates, tools, and other resources, has begun.

**Objective 2**—Ensure that all ICT meet established accessibility standards and that accessibility is incorporated across every step of the product life cycle.

### In progress

- Introduce project deliverables that require project teams to document their plans to incorporate accessibility.
  - During business case development, teams must report on how accessibility is addressed in the project and on potential risks to accessibility. This is currently being piloted by 5 project teams.
- Complete the next phase of the Microsoft 365 rollout to support the implementation of more accessible ICT.
  - The Microsoft 365 rollout is underway. Microsoft 365 has accessibility features that employees can use for a more accessible ICT. Its full implementation is scheduled for completion in January 2024.

**Objective 3**—Ensure that the OAG has the in-house skill set and capacity to create, assess, and maintain accessible documents and software.

### Completed

- Share ICT accessibility tips and tricks through office-wide communication channels to increase awareness and knowledge.
  - ICT accessibility tips were provided during the 2023 National AccessAbility Week events. More than 200 employees attended each event.

## Communication, other than ICT



**Goal**—Produce accessible communication products and activities.

**Objective 1**—Ensure that communication material is as accessible as possible in its original format and that alternative formats are available promptly on request. Fully implement the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat standards and guidelines for accessibility to support all internal and external users of OAG communication materials and resources.

### Completed

- Post information about alternate formats and service standards for providing them.
  - The website was updated in January 2023.
- Make forms and brochures available electronically.
  - Brochures are no longer being produced. Forms for both internal and external use are available electronically.

### In progress

- Establish contracts to provide documents in alternative accessible formats, such as Braille.
  - In the short term, one-off contracts are being used. In the longer term, we will implement standing offer or on-demand contracts to address requests on demand.
- Test the accessibility of web products with internal and external specialists using the WCAG requirements.
  - Testing PDF accessibility was done before the Accessibility Plan initiative. Testing both PDF documents and other products within the publishing function continues.
- Provide alternative formats on demand within the time frames outlined by the *Accessible Canada Regulations*.
  - In the short term, one-off contracts are being used. In the longer term, we will implement standing offer or on-demand contracts to address requests on demand.
- Test the accessibility of documents, such as Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, Microsoft Word documents, Microsoft Excel files, and PDF documents.
  - Official OAG templates were assessed for accessibility when used as designed. Testing against accessibility standards is complete. A plan to educate personnel on the proper use of corporate templates is planned for future years (2024 and 2025).

**Objective 2**—Increase the ease of use for tools and content.

### In progress

- Use sans-serif fonts exclusively.
  - Official designers and OAG templates are using sans-serif fonts. Efforts to inform and enforce use across the office are planned as part of an accessibility toolkit that is under development.

- Respect the use of contrast and colour in visuals.
  - Official designers check for this use. Efforts to inform and enforce use across the office are planned as part of an accessibility toolkit that is under development.
- Secure contracts for interpretation services.
  - A short-term contract is in place; longer-term contracting is planned for January 2024.
- Investigate real-time captioning for office-wide meetings held with in-person components.
  - A short-term contract that includes captions for specific office meetings is in place.

**Objective 3**—Ensure that OAG communications meet the diverse needs of its users.

#### **Completed**

- Acquire the International Organization for Standardization’s guide for plain language (ISO/DIS 24495-1) once it is available.
  - The guide was acquired in August 2023 and is now available for use.

#### **In progress**

- Train employees to use accessibility features.
  - Core accessibility features are being rolled out with ongoing technology updates. A training plan will be developed in 2024.

## **Procurement of goods, services, and facilities**



**Goal**—Ensure that accessibility requirements are considered by both business owners and contracting authorities when purchasing goods and services, and that, where applicable, accessibility requirements inform the technical specifications incorporated in procurement documents.

**Objective 1**—Update internal procurement procedures and tools.

#### **Completed**

- When accessibility considerations are not applicable or not appropriate, clearly justify a reason for each procurement file. The documented justification will ensure that accessibility is always considered.
  - The OAG has implemented a mandatory justification process. When accessibility considerations are not applicable or not appropriate for a specific procurement file, a clear and well-documented justification is applied to the file. The justification ensures a reasonable consideration of accessibility, with the aim of improving procurement outcomes for end users. The practice of documenting the justification in the procurement file was adopted in September 2023.

## What More We Did

- The OAG partnered with different organizations, including the Employment Accessibility Resource Network, to increase representation of persons with disabilities at all levels.
- The OAG invited a speaker to share insights about the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in the workplace. The presentation was delivered via Management Link, an internal network for managers and executives, to lay the foundation for more inclusive thinking.
- The OAG created pre-recorded videos in American Sign Language (ASL) and Quebec Sign Language (LSQ, or langue des signes québécoise) as a pilot for audit overviews for a report submitted in March 2023 about accessible transportation for persons with disabilities.

## Consultations

Throughout 2023, the OAG provided opportunities for feedback by and consultations with persons with disabilities on matters of accessibility. In the absence of a systematic consultation approach, the Accessibility Network of Employees has played a pivotal role in this regard.

The network was initially formed to help inform the development of the accessibility plan. Since then, the 15 members, consisting of employees with disabilities and accessibility allies, continue to provide feedback on various aspects of the plan through their participation in regularly scheduled meetings where they share concerns and discuss potential solutions. Members were engaged in and commented on the preparation of this report.

Although some consultations took place in 2023, we recognize the need to institute a more systematic consultation approach. This approach will begin in January 2024.

Here are the consultations and information sessions that took place in 2023 for some of the completed and in-progress actions of the plan.

### Redesigning workspaces and implementing GCworkplace

- **December 2022**—Two information sessions were conducted to present draft versions of redesigned workspaces.
- **May 2023**—Four virtual sessions were held to provide information and gain insights on the anticipated return to the office and to facilitate a question-and-answer session. The feedback from employees, including those with disabilities, was also collected through a dedicated email mailbox after the sessions. This feedback was pivotal in enhancing the on-site experience and served as a foundational reference for future improvements in the temporary space.
- **July 2023**—Employees were invited to select new office mural designs by survey.
- **October 2023**—Teams and groups were invited to tour the newly renovated office spaces in Ottawa. The purpose of the 6 sessions between October 16 and November 2 was to familiarize employees with all features, including accessibility features, of the new spaces while also gaining insights on barriers. The feedback provided regarding lockers and quiet spaces will be addressed with the next round of designs, which is currently underway.

- **Ongoing**—A dedicated email mailbox is in use regularly to gather feedback and address matters related to our physical workspaces.

### Consultations linked to the Employment priority area for action

- **March 2023**—Two consultations took place with the Accessibility Network of Employees and members of the Diversity and Inclusion Group on the 2023–26 Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- **July 2023**—Discussions with the Accessibility Network of Employees were also held to receive input on matters related to allergies in the workplace.

### Ongoing dialogue with the Accessibility Working Group responsible for implementing the plan and with the Accessibility Network of Employees

- **January 2023**—On January 20, members of the Accessibility Network of Employees met with members of the Accessibility Working Group. They focused on the priority area action plans, progress updates, planned next steps, and a question-and-answer session.
- **February 2023**—The first of the 2 meetings facilitated with the Accessibility Network of Employees was held on February 2 to share views about the plan. This session was followed by one-on-one discussions between the facilitator and some of the members of the Accessibility Working Group. The second meeting on February 3 followed up from the January 20 meeting and focused on the Employment priority area for action with several Human Resources service leads on hand to answer questions from the network members.
- **March 2023**—Two virtual consultation periods were organized in March 2023 to seek feedback from the Accessibility Network of Employees and members of the Diversity and Inclusion Group on the development of the 2023–26 Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- **April and May 2023**—Members of the Accessibility Working Group and Accessibility Network of Employees jointly planned the 2023 National AccessAbility Week activities for the OAG.
- **June 2023**—On June 21, the network was informed in advance of the introduction of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport on 27 June 2023.
- **June and July 2023**—At the network’s request, 2 discussions were held on June 21 and July 12 about matters related to allergens in the workplace and the signage that was proposed by the Workplace Health and Safety Committee and the Policy Health and Safety Committee.
- **October 2023**—The draft annual progress report was shared with the Accessibility Network of Employees for its review. The network shared summary feedback and questions on October 11 with the Accessibility Working Group regarding the status of the plan’s implementation. The detailed comments were provided by email on October 12 in preparation for a more detailed discussion with each priority area representative in November.
- **November 2023**—The Accessibility Network of Employees shared detailed feedback with each Accessibility Working Group lead during 5 sessions between November 6 and 16 regarding the status of the plan’s implementation. It was agreed that a process for fulsome consultation will be instituted for 2024.

## Feedback

The OAG encourages feedback on accessibility matters, particularly from persons with disabilities and allies.

All feedback is sent to a senior policy analyst who acts as our [Accessibility Coordinator](#). This critical function is currently part of the responsibility of the Senior Policy Analyst for Accessibility.

Please see the [Providing Feedback About Accessibility](#) section on our website for

- a description of the feedback process
- information on how to submit your feedback and how it will be used
- information on how to request alternate formats

In 2023, our feedback process was used only once by a member of the public. The requester wanted to be notified of the publication of reports concerning persons with disabilities. In response, we shared our procedure to obtain these reports.

We remain open to receiving external feedback related to accessibility within our organization, and we will reflect on what more we can do.

## What We Learned From 2023

This first year of implementation has provided us with an opportunity to set expectations for the coming year. We want to recognize the work that our Accessibility Working Group and Accessibility Network of Employees accomplished in 2023.

Here are 3 key things we learned in 2023:

- The resources, time, and effort required to deliver the plan's elements are greater than anticipated.
- We must improve our consultations with persons living with disabilities and how we report on them.
- A systematic consultation process that considers our employees' right to self-identify will be redefined and applied throughout 2024.
- We must link certain actions of the plan more tangibly to the outcomes that we seek in removing barriers for persons living with disabilities.

As we conclude this first annual progress report, it is fitting to reference the proverb quoted by the Auditor General in her introductory message to the OAG Accessibility Plan 2022–25: “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.” The tree we planted is starting to take root. With continued effort and in doing our part, the OAG's contribution to a barrier-free Canada, for all Canadians, will grow every day.

# Glossary

**Accessibility standards**—Standards that are used to assess information and communication technologies (ICT) accessibility compliance and that align with the guidelines indicated by the Government of Canada. At this time, ICT will be required to comply with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#).

**ASG/ASG-IT Development Fund**—An initiative that supports Audit Services Group (ASG) and ASG-IT (Information Technology) employees in pursuing advanced academic studies at a recognized institution (such as a college or university). Funding commitments are made available to eligible employees on an annual basis. Participants must reapply annually.

**Barrier**—Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of people with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Barriers can include anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal; anything that is based on information or communications; or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice.

**Business owner**—An individual who is responsible for the business or program area for which the procurement is established. The business owner is responsible for

- defining the required capabilities, intended business outcomes, and benefits of a procurement at its outset
- achieving the business outcomes and benefits following implementation

**Contracting authority**—A person who has delegated contracting authority to enter into a contract or contractual arrangement on behalf of the OAG.

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

Anyone can identify as a person with a disability if they experience 1 or more of these impairments or functional limitations that, in interaction with a barrier, hinder their full and equal participation in society.

**GCworkplace**—A modern, efficient, and inclusive workplace that responds to the needs of the public service workforce and supports a flexible way of working.

**ISO/DIS 24495-1**—An international guide from the International Organization for Standardization that sets out guidelines and principles for developing plain-language documents intended for the general public.

**Mosaic Leadership Development Program**—[A program](#) for equity-seeking employees at the executive-minus-1 level that aims to bridge gaps in representation in the senior ranks and level the playing field by providing access to leadership development and career advancement.

**Real-time captioning** (also known as **live closed captioning**)—Text-based captions used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing to access content delivered by spoken words and sounds. Real-time captions, or Computer Assisted Real-Time Translation (CART), are created as an event takes place.

**Teletypewriter (TTY)**—A communication device used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have a severe speech impairment.