Government of
Newfoundland and Labrador

Accessibility Plan

2024-2026

Newfoundland & Labrador

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Table of Contents

Statement of Commitment 3
Recommendations from the Network of Disability Organizations 4
Accessibility Advancement Highlights 7
- Accessibility Act 7
- Physical/Built Environment 7
- Technology and Accessibility 8
- Accessibility and Disability Considerations in Employee Training 9
- Accommodations for Skilled Trades Exam Challengers 9
- Amendments to the Buildings Accessibility Act 10
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee 11
- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Survey 13
- Accessibility Updates to Cultural Sites 13
- Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plans 14
- Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities 14
- Accessibility/Disability Related Funding, Programs, and Services 15

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Goals 19
- Goal One: Increase Accessibility/Disability Training Opportunities 19
- Goal Two: Improve Accessibility in Training 20
- Goal Three: Ensure Application of Accessible Communications Policy 21
- Goal Four: Upgrade Software to Increase Accessibility 22
- Goal Five: Accessibility Study of Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Buildings 23
- Goal Six: Training for Selection Board Chairs to Further Increase Equity in the Recruitment Process 24
- Goal Seven: Enhance Current Accessibility Initiatives to Further Increase Equity in the Recruitment Process 24
- Goal Eight: Improve Accessibility of Procurement Process 25

Goal Nine: Departmental Identification of Accessibility Leads 26
Promoting, Monitoring, and Evaluating 28
Conclusion 29
Glossary of Terms 30

Statement of Commitment

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's **Accessibility Act** became law on December 3, 2021. This enabling legislation allows the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to outline the principles and goals for an accessible province.

Under the **Accessibility Act**, public bodies are required to develop an accessibility plan and make it public within two years and every three years thereafter. As accessibility standards are developed and approved by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, these standards will be incorporated into the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Accessibility Plan.

Through the development of the Accessibility Plan, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to improving accessibility by preventing, identifying, and removing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from equitable access to services and opportunities. The goals outlined in this plan promote and foster inclusion for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador respects the dignity and diversity of individuals, by ensuring all policy and legislative work is grounded in the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us." The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador values the input and contributions of key stakeholders in the development of this plan, including but not limited to persons with disabilities as well as organizations of and for persons with disabilities. Partnerships with these valued stakeholders will be vital to achieving the outcomes set out in this Accessibility Plan and in creating an accessible province.

When we know better, we do better. This Accessibility Plan is a dynamic process and a living document that will continue to evolve as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador progresses toward full inclusion and accessibility.

Recommendations from the Network of Disability Organizations

As per the **Accessibility Act**, persons with disabilities, as well as representatives of organizations representing persons with disabilities, were consulted in the development of this Accessibility Plan. These consultations were facilitated in part through the Network of Disability Organizations, which include community groups that provide advocacy, programs, and services for persons with disabilities.

Virtual consultation sessions provided the opportunity for Network representatives to offer suggestions and recommendations for Provincial Government to consider in the development and implementation of goals to improve accessibility within the public service. Information shared by representatives of the Network have been integrated throughout this Accessibility Plan, in the spirit of Nothing About Us Without Us, and will help guide implementation.

The information provided within these sessions will also help to inform future Provincial Government accessibility plans. As the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador implements this Accessibility Plan, ongoing collaboration with the community of and for persons with disabilities will be essential to advancing accessibility and inclusion for all.

Below is a summary, organized by barrier type, of the information shared by representatives of the Network of Disability Organizations.

Attitudinal Barriers

Representatives from the Network of Disability Organizations underscored that a cross-disability lens is essential in planning, policy and practice. This means that all types of disabilities are considered and all types of barriers are identified and removed.

When considering accessibility in the workplace, Network representatives encouraged the creation of safe and respectful work environments that promote inclusion where everyone can share thoughts and concerns regarding accessibility. They advised that this helps to create a culture in

which people feel supported in requesting disability-related accommodations. These accommodations may include, but are not limited to Proloquo (an application designed to meet communication needs for non-speaking people), communication boards, American Sign Language interpretation, captioning, hearing assistive technology and pocket talkers.

With respect to hiring and recruitment processes, Network representatives highlighted the importance of considering an applicant's professional and personal competencies, in addition to their interview performance. They recommended that measures be taken to improve accessibility in standard interview practices for the benefit of all applicants to reduce the need to request accommodations. Network representatives suggested acoustics and lighting be considered in the accessibility of interview spaces, in addition to physical accessibility.

Physical/Built Environment Barriers

Representatives from the Network of Disability Organizations supported infrastructure improvements and renovations to improve accessibility in Government of Newfoundland and Labrador infrastructure. They recommended that workspaces accommodate from a cross-disability perspective. Representatives from the Network suggested avoiding harsh lighting, ensuring low noise levels, proper acoustics, warm paint colors, clear contrast with borders on walls, and transition strips on stairs and ramps to ensure sensory friendly spaces. They further suggested that signage with braille, raised lettering and/or QR codes, social narratives, tactile indicators, and wayfinding are important for navigating physical spaces. Visual alarms were also recommended to be installed in office spaces, as well as common areas, to enhance safety for persons with disabilities.

Network representatives agreed with Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's use of universal design to exceed minimum standards. They recommended the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador align with federal accessibility standards, such as Canadian Standards Association/Accessibility Standards Canada B651, Accessible design for the built environment.

Legislative/Policy/Program Barriers

In addition to accessibility enhancements to online procurement platforms, representatives from the Network of Disability Organizations recommended considering accessibility when procuring office equipment, such as purchasing chairs without wheels.

In discussions pertaining to each Provincial Government department identifying an accessibility lead, Network representatives suggested each lead be a person with decision-making authority (e.g. manager, director, or executive lead) to increase accountability and ensure work is progressing.

Information/Communication/Technology Barriers

Representatives from the Network of Disability Organizations advised that while technology and online services remove many barriers to accessibility, they can also create barriers for some persons with disabilities. It is important to consider varying literacy levels and technology literacy levels when implementing online services. Network representatives recommended that online services do not replace other service delivery options, such as in-person, telephone or text communication, and noted that education and training may be necessary to assist individuals in navigating online platforms. Adequate user testing by persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure all barriers are addressed and alternatives should be available to meet a variety of needs.

Network representatives further recommended that public spaces include signage communicating the assistive technology, equipment, or accommodations available at that site, such as hearing assistive technology. They also noted the importance of staff training and proper maintenance for these devices.

With respect to software systems, Network representatives recommended software be less formal in appearance and include more options for user control. They further advised that a variety of software tools and strategies are necessary for full accessibility.

Finally, representatives from the Network recommended creating an accessibility checklist for virtual and in-person meetings and sent to attendees in advance. They also recommended turning on cameras when speaking in a virtual meeting to assist with lip reading.

Accessibility Advancement Highlights

The items highlighted in this section represent many of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's accessibility advancements to date. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes that while progress towards accessibility has occurred through a number of accessibility advancements over the years, our advancements will be ongoing as we aim to become a fully inclusive province.

Accessibility Act

The **Accessibility Act** became law on December 3, 2021. This enabling legislation allows the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to outline the principles and goals for an accessible province. The **Accessibility Act** aims to improve accessibility by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from full participation in society.

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board was established in June 2022. The Board advises and makes recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities regarding the establishment and content of accessibility standards, and the time periods for their implementation.

The first standard approved for development is Accessible Customer Service. Work is ongoing to establish the Accessible Customer Service Standard Development Committee. The second standard approved for development is Accessible Information and Communication. As standards and regulations are developed, they will be incorporated into this Accessibility Plan as required.

Physical/Built Environment

As part of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure's open call for bids for Provincial Government leased accommodations, specific

language regarding accessibility is included in the documentation as a set requirement for all potential bidders. Existing and proposed buildings must provide access and facilities as required under the current edition of the **Buildings Accessibility Act** and related regulations. The age of the building or the scope of the proposed renovations still requires that the premises be made fully accessible and comply in a manner that is acceptable to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, the **Act** and its regulations.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure implemented a Universal Design Standard in May 2022 that addresses accessibility requirements for the design and construction of new facilities, as well as the retrofit, alteration, or addition to existing facilities, owned, leased, or operated by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. This standard addresses a diverse range of user needs, including persons with disabilities, and embraces the spirit of universal design through the creation of inclusive environments. The Universal Design Standard applies to municipal capital works projects funded, in part, by the department. Provincial Government's major design-build-finance-maintain projects are required to follow to principles of universal design.

In 2019, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure's marine vessel crews completed specialized training from InclusionNL to accommodate properly passengers that have mobility disabilities. Given staff turnover and the importance of remaining current, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is looking to undertake refresher training with InclusionNL.

Technology and Accessibility

The Office of the Chief Information Officer's Web Team creates websites, templates, and frameworks that follow industry standard best practices in HTML, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and Web Accessibility Initiative. The Web Team also provides training to website editors, which includes high-level accessibility guidelines and best practices to follow when adding content to the web.

Additionally, the Office of the Chief Information Officer's Customer Experience (UI/UX) Team provides accessibility development guidelines to project teams and any website rebuilds when tasked with improving the customer/user experience.

Accessibility and Disability Considerations in Employee Training

The Centre for Learning and Development, in its commitment to inclusivity, has focused on developing learning content that follows accessibility requirements. This includes the use of sans-serif fonts, thoughtful white space design, high-contrast visuals, closed-captioning, and comprehensive alt text for images. This commitment extends to ensuring that all new content development follows these best practices. Additionally, these principles are applied during redevelopment or large-scale edits of existing courses. Other accessibility considerations include a focus on plain language writing; communication and learner support; training room accommodations; use of accessible-enabled software; and, collaborative initiatives for inclusive learning.

The Centre for Learning and Development offered a workshop, "Building Your Disability Confidence," that was delivered by Empower to Public Service Commission employees. This workshop focused on helping employees and clients with disabilities. The workshop shared information and resources resulting in employees having greater confidence in disability related matters in their daily work. The latest version, "Building Accessibility Confidence", was offered to the entire public service through the Centre for Learning and Development.

Accommodations for Skilled Trades Exam Challengers

The Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills ensures exam accommodations (e.g. Level, Red Seal, Blaster, and Power Engineer exams) are available to clients with disabilities or language barriers. Accommodations include extra time to complete the exam (up to a

maximum of six hours); presence of an interpreter, reader, translator or scribe; a quiet location; splitting/chunking of an exam; special exam formatting; and, assistive technology.

Amendments to the Buildings Accessibility Act

Bill 52 (**An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act**) received Royal Assent in the House of Assembly on November 16, 2023. The amendments in Bill 52 will repeal the section of the **Act** that stated that buildings constructed prior to 1981 need not comply with the Act when undergoing reconstruction, change in use or being added to unless the cumulative cost of renovation exceeds fifty percent of the cost of erecting a new building of the same character and dimensions. The changes made through Bill 52 will provide for a wider application of buildings accessibility requirements than previously existed, primarily with the removal of the pre-1981 exemption, which will enable equal application of the National Building Code to all public buildings, regardless of when they were constructed.

National Building Code Construction Codes are technical provisions for the design and construction of new buildings and for the use, alteration, maintenance, changes of use and demolition of existing buildings. They include standards for buildings accessibility that are made effective within provinces and territories, and are based on National Codes, including the National Building Code of Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador, and other federal, provincial, and territorial governments signed a Reconciliation Agreement on Construction Codes in 2021, the purpose of which is

- to reduce or eliminate differences and variations in the Technical Provision of Construction Codes;
- timely adoption of Construction Codes;
- a transformed National Code Development System to meet the needs of the Parties; and
- to provide freely available National and Construction Codes.

Newfoundland and Labrador is represented on the Canadian Table for Harmonized Construction Codes.

Bill 52, upon coming into force, will also promote compliance by doubling the fines and clarifying how the **Act** applies to home-based businesses. The Regulations under the **Act** will also be updated to require public buildings with an occupancy of more than 300 persons to be equipped with full-service family washrooms, including an adult-sized change table. The amendments were informed by recommendations of the Buildings Accessibility Advisory Board and public consultations.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee

In 2023, the Public Service Commission established the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee to centralize employer efforts to advance the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility in the public service workforce. Although chaired by the Public Service Commission, this is a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador stakeholder group. The committee membership reflects a balance of representation from Government of Newfoundland and Labrador departments including: Children, Seniors and Social Development (Disability Policy Office and Seniors and Aging); Office of Women and Gender Equality; Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; Digital Government and Service NL (Office of French Services); Justice and Public Safety; Human Rights Commission; Office of the Chief Information Officer; and, Treasury Board Secretariat. The mandate is to serve as an advisory source of expertise and inspiration for Government of Newfoundland and Labrador leadership on the creation of corporate initiatives, strategies, and policy considerations with the ultimate goals of creating inclusive spaces, celebrating diversity, seeking equity across the organization, and ensuring accessibility is top of mind.

The Committee will help inform Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's future direction with respect to constructing an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee strategy by:

- Creating short, medium and long term goals to foster inclusive, equitable and accessible workplaces;

- Identifying and analyzing data with respect to self-identification as it relates to ensuring no barriers to recruitment and retention;
- Respecting diversity in all forms and life journeys; and,
- Forming appropriate training strategies that help educate Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees at all levels.

In 2022, Strategic Staffing Division created several internal committees focused on quality improvement within its operations. One of those committees formed was an internal Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Innovation Committee and includes representatives from other divisions within the Public Service Commission. The goal is to expand the scope by implementing more accessible pathways for diverse groups to public service opportunities, inclusive of immigration initiatives. Such efforts include:

- Training sessions piloted to specific audiences of Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Consideration is being given to future options of delivery to a broader audience. The training sessions include:
    - Diversity, Inclusion and You, delivered by Women in Resource Development Corporation
    - Inclusive Leadership, delivered by Women in Resource Development Corporation
    - Building Accessibility Confidence, delivered by Empower/InclusionNL
    - 2SLGBTQIA+ Awareness Training, delivered by Quadrangle
    - Autism Awareness and Understanding in the Public Service, delivered by Autism Society
- Strategic Staffing Division responds to requests for accommodations from applicants during any stage of recruitment activities associated with public service job competitions. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Innovation Committee is reviewing communications related to public service job ads, interview invitations, and

assessment processes to further highlight the availability of accommodation options.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Survey

The Provincial Government recently launched a demographic survey that will help inform inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility goals. The information collected will highlight the current demographics of the public service workforce, promote workplace inclusivity and provide a better understanding of employees' sense of belonging.

Accessibility Updates to Cultural Sites

- The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation has completed accessibility updates to the structure and operations of the Colonial Building Provincial Historic Site to remove accessibility barriers. Modifications include: improving existing accessible parking; removing obstacles that impede mobility by installing concrete pathways; signage for wayfinding; push button doors; accessible washrooms; and, a lift servicing all three floors. Exhibits were also modified to improve accessibility by spacing exhibit cases to provide an extra wide passageway between them, and having interpretation panels installed at an accessible reading height. Hearing assistive technology is planned for the 2024 season.

- On August 26, 2023, the Joseph R. Smallwood Arts and Culture Centre in Gander hosted a matinee performance of the musical, "Come From Away." Designed with organizations of and for persons with disabilities, the performance provided both Live Description and American Sign Language for audience members requiring assistance. This performance was well received and well attended.

- The Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve Interpretation Centre was modified by the Department of Environment and Climate Change for

accessibility in 2021, when upgrades were made to the accessible diorama for people who cannot physically access the viewing site.

Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plans

The Department of Industry, Energy and Technology requires Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plans for all large-scale natural resource projects in the province. These plans include commitments such as employment targets for persons with disabilities, and scholarships and co-op education placements for persons with disabilities. Reporting is based on voluntary self-identification, as not all persons with disabilities choose to self-identify. Targets act as a guide rather than a benchmark as participation is subjective and based on self-disclosure.

Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities

For more than 30 years, the Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities has been operating programs to help people with disabilities find jobs in the public service in various locations throughout the province:

- The Opening Doors Program includes full-time positions ranging from temporary to permanent within Provincial Government departments and provides access to other career pathing and learning and development opportunities.
- The Student Summer Employment Program provides post-secondary students with disabilities an opportunity to work in a field related to their training and to gain skills and knowledge for future entry into the labour market.
- Cost-shared wage subsidy initiatives that provide resume building opportunities for persons with disabilities to work in Provincial Government and agencies, boards and commissions.
- Personalized career development supports, including resume development, interview preparation, and connection to other Provincial

Government departments or community organizations, depending on the individual needs identified during interactions with clients.

- Consultations with local, disability-focused, community organizations to ensure that its programs and services are reflective of current accessibility best practices.
- Connections with other community partners, including the Murphy Centre, Avalon Employment, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Memorial University, and College of the North Atlantic to share ideas and better support each other's programs for people with disabilities.

Accessibility/Disability Related Funding, Programs, and Services

There are various grants and programs across the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that aim to improve accessibility and inclusivity. Examples of these grants and programs are broken down by department below.

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs offered:

- **The Accessible Communities Fund Grant** was provided in 2023 to help communities undertake projects or initiatives to improve the well-being of residents by making their communities more welcoming and inclusive.
- **The Building Age-Friendly Communities Grant** provided $2 million in funding in March 2023 for small municipal infrastructure projects to ensure accessibility for seniors in 137 communities throughout the province.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development offers:

- **Accessible Taxi Grant** assists taxi applicants with the costs of a passenger vehicle that meets accessibility standards to accommodate passengers with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and scooters.
- **Accessible Vehicle Grant** supports individuals or families to adapt personal vehicles for accessibility.
- **Capacity Grant** enables persons with disabilities to become fully engaged in their community and lead transformative change. The enduring legacy of a capacity grant will be its impact over the long term and how it has affected the lives of persons with disabilities.
- **Inclusion Grant** provides grants to eligible community-based and non-profit organizations to help them create more accessible and inclusive facilities and events.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program** contributes up to $100,000 to eligible municipalities, Indigenous Governing Bodies, and provincially incorporated not-for-profit organizations to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of accessible and inclusive community transportation services.
- **Summer Camp Inclusion Grant** provides funding for a support person to assist children with disabilities to attend summer camp.

The Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills offers:

- **Work-Related Supports for Persons with Disabilities Program** provides workplace accommodations, adaptations, assistive technology devices, and technical equipment to a maximum of $5,000 for persons with disabilities.
- **Supported Employment Program** provides funding to community-based organizations who work with adults diagnosed with intellectual disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment, including orientation, work analysis and support from a job trainer.
- **School to Work Transitions** provides funding to community-based organizations that work with high school students diagnosed with intellectual disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment during the

summer, and after school or on weekends. Supports range from orientation and work analysis, to support from a job trainer.
- **Employment Transitions for Individuals with Autism Pilot Program** provides funding to community-based organizations to engage with and support adults on the autism spectrum to obtain long-term employment.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation offers:

- The Recreation and Sport Division has provided funding since 2016 to Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador, managing partner of the Recreation and Sport for Persons With a Disability Initiative, which targets increased participation in sport and recreation for persons with a disability. The Recreation and Sport for Persons With a Disability Initiative is designed to build capacity, remove barriers, and develop actions by collaborating with key stakeholders in recreation, sport, education, and disability sectors.

The Department of Labrador Affairs offers:

- Through the Labrador Sports Travel Subsidy program provides support for Labrador youth age 18 or younger to travel to provincial sporting competitions, provincial training camps, Canada Games team selections, and training or competitions. The subsidy also provides support for coaching and official development, hosting provincial minor championships in Labrador and travel for Special Olympians of all ages.

The Department of Health and Community Services offers:

- **Special Child Welfare Allowance Program** assists applicants with the cost of services/supports to families with a child under the age of 18 years who has a physical or intellectual disability living at home.
- **Special Assistance Program – Medical Equipment and Supplies** provides basic medical supplies and equipment to assist with activities of daily living for individuals living in the community. Benefits of the program include medical supplies such as dressings, catheters, and incontinent supplies; oxygen and related equipment and supplies;

orthotics such as braces and burn garments; and, equipment such as wheelchairs, commodes, or walkers.

- **Direct Home Services Program** is available to families with infants and preschool-aged children who may have disabilities related to cognition, language, physical, social-emotional, and/or self-help. The goal of the program is to develop and implement individualized skill teaching and behavioural support strategies with the family to achieve positive gains in the child's development. This program includes the **Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program** available for children up to Grade Three who have been clinically diagnosed with autism and provides supports and strategies to families to implement techniques with their child that encourage skill development.
- **Community Behavioural Services Program** is a strengths-based program guided by a set of ideals that promote community inclusion, positive programming, and least restrictive treatment principles.
- **Provincial Home Support Program** includes the provision of personal and behavioural supports, household management and respite at the minimum level to maintain individual independence.
- **Residential Program Options** provide supports for adults with disability-related support needs to reside in home settings in the community. There are several support options available including Board and Lodging Supplement, Alternative Family Care, Cooperative Apartments, and Individualized or Shared Living Arrangements. Clinical diagnosis of autism is not required to access services.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services** staff provide a range of therapeutic and professional services in a variety of settings that support persons with disabilities. Staff may include social workers, nurses, behavioural and child management specialists, dieticians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and laboratory technicians.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Goals

This Accessibility Plan applies to all Provincial Government departments. While individual departments will lead some of this work, many of these goals will require contributions from all Provincial Government departments. These goals were developed with a cross- disability lens, based on common themes across departments relating to accessibility, and will improve accessibility across Provincial Government policies, programs and services. These goals will be achieved within a one to three year period, subject to budgetary appropriations where applicable. Departments may also undertake specific actions to achieve these goals.

Goal One: Increase Accessibility/Disability Training Opportunities

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission; Children, Seniors and Social Development

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will work in collaboration with the community of and for persons with disabilities to develop and/or deliver cross-disability and accessibility awareness training, with the goal that this training be delivered to all public service employees. The training will increase awareness and understanding of accessibility, challenge unconscious bias, and educate on how to identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities, both within the public service and the broader public. This training will be updated on an ongoing basis to ensure it reflects current best practices for accessibility.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, Public Service Commission and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development will develop new accessibility/disability related training in collaboration with organizations of and for persons with disabilities.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, Public Service Commission and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development will implement accessibility/disability related training for public service employees.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, Public Service Commission and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development will evaluate completion of accessibility/disability related training by Provincial Government employees, and update accessibility/disability related training, as required, in collaboration with organizations of and for persons with disabilities.

Goal Two: Improve Accessibility in Training

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission

The Centre for Learning and Development will take actions to ensure courses are accessible, such as adding audio content to courses, closed captioning and other initiatives related to ease of access to Public Service Commission services for people with disabilities.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, the Centre for Learning and Development will assess the current course catalog for continued accessibility, based on newer initiatives such as adding closed captioning, audio recording as well as other actions intended to enhance equitable access.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, the Centre for Learning and Development will begin taking action towards further enhancing accessibility within their course catalog.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, the Centre for Learning and Development will evaluate its actions towards further enhancing accessibility within their course catalog.

Goal Three: Ensure Application of Accessible Communications Policy

Lead Department(s): Communications and Public Engagement

All Provincial Government Departments will follow the Accessible Communications Policy for all documents, training modules, information, and resources going forward. This includes using plain language, alt-text for images, making alternate formats available upon request, and building new websites to follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, including appropriate contrast for text, and discernable colors for graphics.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, Communications and Public Engagement will form an oversight committee to ensure consistent application of the Accessible Communications Policy.
- By December 31, 2024, the Office of the Chief Information Officer will develop an online accessibility resource, in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, to provide information and support to designers and developers of Provincial Government websites and applications.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, Communications and Public Engagement will provide education and resources to support departments in adhering to Accessible Communications Policy.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, Communications and Public Engagement will evaluate the consistent departmental application of the Accessible Communications Policy.

Goal Four: Upgrade Software to Increase Accessibility

Lead Department(s): Office of the Chief Information Officer

Office of the Chief Information Officer is implementing Microsoft M365 for all Provincial Government departments. This will increase accessibility/inclusion options in staff desktop software by enabling functions such as the Accessibility Checker, closed captioning, and language translation. Office of the Chief Information Officer is ensuring proper communication and training is provided so users are aware of accessibility options.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, Office of the Chief Information Officer will provide education and training on Teams Meeting accessibility features to users.
- By December 31, 2024, Office of the Chief Information Officer will host M365 Accessibility training resources on the “Welcome to M365” Teams group.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, Office of the Chief Information Officer will engage CSSD’s DPO to provide access to Microsoft Accessibility training resources.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, Office of the Chief Information Officer will evaluate full implementation of Microsoft M365 in all Provincial Government departments.

- By December 31, 2026, Office of the Chief Information Officer will evaluate user awareness of Microsoft M365 accessibility features.

Goal Five: Accessibility Study of Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Buildings

Lead Department(s): Transportation and Infrastructure

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Universal Design Standard 2021, released in May 2022 for use by departmental staff and consultants, is being implemented on new projects. An accessibility study of 20 Provincial Government owned or occupied buildings throughout Newfoundland and Labrador is in the planning stages, with procurement of a consultant team. Evaluation of these 20 facilities will be based on the Universal Design Standard, which meets or exceeds the current **Buildings Accessibility Act** and associated Regulations. This study is anticipated to be completed within three years and will incorporate feedback from persons with disabilities.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will complete an accessibility study of 20 Provincial Government owned or occupied buildings.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will use results of the accessibility study to develop an action plan to improve efforts to overcome barriers to accessibility in Provincial Government owned or occupied buildings.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will continue implementation of the action plan to overcome barriers to accessibility in Provincial Government owned or occupied buildings.

Goal Six: Training for Selection Board Chairs to Further Increase Equity in the Recruitment Process

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission will focus on practical training for Selection Board Chairs concerning accessibility and accommodations throughout the recruitment process to build a consistent foundation of disability awareness.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, the Public Service Commission will develop enhanced disability awareness training to be utilized during the Selection Board Chair training process, in collaboration with the Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities and other internal stakeholders.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, the Public Service Commission will implement and monitor the enhanced disability awareness training into the Selection Board Chair training curriculum.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, the Public Service Commission will evaluate the effectiveness of enhanced accessibility awareness within Selection Board Chair training.

Goal Seven: Enhance Current Accessibility Initiatives to Further Increase Equity in the Recruitment Process

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission will build upon current accessibility initiatives to further ensure a recruitment process free of barriers. The internal Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Innovation Committee

within the Strategic Staffing Division, Public Service Commission, is currently analyzing the recruitment process with the intent to enhance accessibility.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, Public Service Commission will assess the current recruitment process to identify opportunities where further accessibility initiatives can be implemented.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, Public Service Commission will implement the results of the prior assessment concerning the recruitment process.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, Public Service Commission will assess the effectiveness of the new recruitment communication through further consultation of committees and other stakeholders.

Goal Eight: Improve Accessibility of Procurement Process

Lead Department(s): Public Procurement Agency

Public Procurement Agency will work with their online procurement platform provider (MERX) to identify possible improvements to enhance the accessibility of bid documents, including using plain language and providing alternate formats.

Public Procurement Agency will create a mechanism to receive feedback from vendors and suppliers that allows for the reporting of accessibility concerns or issues encountered during the procurement process.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2024, Public Procurement Agency will identify improvements to enhance the accessibility of bid documents.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, Public Procurement Agency will implement identified improvements, where practicable, to enhance the accessibility of bid documents.
- By December 31, 2025, Public Procurement Agency will create mechanism to receive feedback from vendors and suppliers to report accessibility concerns.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, Public Procurement Agency will implement reporting mechanism to receive feedback from vendors and suppliers.
- By December 31, 2026, Public Procurement Agency will evaluate feedback and develop action plan to address identified barriers to accessibility, where practicable, in the procurement process.

Goal Nine: Departmental Identification of Accessibility Leads

Lead Department(s): All Provincial Government Departments

An accessibility lead will be identified by each Provincial Government department to assist with roll out and implementation of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Accessibility Plan. This will help to increase accountability and ensure work is progressing.

2024 Indicator(s):

- By March 31, 2024, an accessibility lead will be assigned in each Provincial Government department.

- By June 30, 2024, an accessibility oversight committee will be established to oversee Provincial Government's progress in advancing accessibility goals.
- By December 31, 2024, the accessibility oversight committee will evaluate successes and identify gaps in the Accessibility Plan.

2025 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2025, accessibility oversight committee will review status and progress of Provincial Government's progress toward attainment of accessibility goals.
- By December 31, 2025, accessibility oversight committee will identify, prevent, and remove barriers to the attainment of accessibility goals.

2026 Indicator(s):

- By December 31, 2026, accessibility oversight committee will have evaluated Provincial Government's 2024-26 Accessibility Plan. This evaluation will inform the subsequent Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Accessibility Plan 2027-29.

Promoting, Monitoring, and Evaluating

Promoting and raising awareness of this Accessibility Plan is crucial to ensuring actionable items within this plan are undertaken. In particular, promotion of this plan to Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees will be essential, as employees will be responsible for contributing to the accessibility goals set out by the Provincial Government within this plan.

Using a continuous quality improvement approach, the outcomes of this Accessibility Plan will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Disability Policy Office, in consultation with the accessibility oversight committee, will review the plan annually with all Provincial Government departments to obtain a progress update. Any barriers identified to achieving accessibility goals will be addressed during these annual reviews. In addition, the plan will be updated as required, such as when a new standard and subsequent regulations are developed. A full review of the plan, seeking feedback from stakeholders, including organizations of and for persons with disabilities, will be completed by December 31, 2026. This evaluation will inform Provincial Government's subsequent accessibility plan for 2027-29.

The **Accessibility Act** includes compliance and enforcement measures as accessibility standards become regulation and are incorporated into accessibility plans. These measures include the appointment of a Director of Compliance and Enforcement to monitor compliance of accessibility standards and regulations. The Director will monitor all complaints of noncompliance, and has the authority to issue orders and monetary penalties. Representatives of the Network of Disability Organizations emphasize the importance of accountability, enforcement, and compliance as we move forward with the implementation of the Accessibility Plan and future accessibility standards and regulations.

The Accessibility Plan will be made publicly available on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website.

Conclusion

Through the ongoing evaluation of the 2024-26 Accessibility Plan, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will work to operationalize this plan to create impactful change and progress by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to collaborating with stakeholders, such as persons with disabilities, and organizations of and for persons with disabilities during the development, implementation and evaluation of this Accessibility Plan and future plans. All Provincial Government departments will work in partnership towards the achievement of the goals outlined in this Accessibility Plan. Collaboration is our key to success, and together, we can work towards our vision of a province that is fully accessible and inclusive for all.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility

As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, accessibility is the quality of an environment that enables a person to access it with ease.

Accessibility Plan

As defined in the **Accessibility Act**, an accessibility plan is a plan to address the prevention, identification, and removal of barriers in the policies, programs, practices, and services of a public body.

Accommodation

The Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology defines accommodation as a measure taken by management based on the personal circumstances of an employee that is designed to enable them to carry out their duties and fully participate in work-related activities. Examples include acquiring or modifying equipment, software or devices, modifying work schedules, or providing assistance through support services.

In the context of providing services to the public, an accommodation is any technical aid or device, personal support, disability-related support or other accommodation a person may require to fully participate in meetings, events, and information sessions. Examples include accessible meeting rooms, accessible formats for documents, American Sign Language interpreters, live captioning, and decision-making supporters.

Barrier

A barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society. Barriers can be physical, architectural, information

or communication related, attitudinal, technological, or established by or perpetuated by an act, regulation, policy, or practice.

Physical/Architectural Barriers

Physical and architectural barriers happen when features of buildings or spaces limit people's access.

Examples: Stairs without ramps or elevators; low lighting or weak color contrast; lack of accessible parking or washrooms.

Information and Communication Barriers

Information or communication barriers exist because not all people read or understand in the same way. When information is not communicated in a way that all persons can access or understand it, it presents a barrier.

Examples: Public meetings or events without American Sign Language interpretation; PDF documents made from images instead of text; websites that do not comply with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers happen when people do not understand how disabilities affect people's lives. These misunderstandings can lead to false assumptions about what persons with disabilities can do, want, or need. Attitudinal barriers come from an unconscious bias. Attitudinal barriers happen because of stereotypes, lack of awareness and discrimination.

Examples: Someone may not assign a laptop to a new employee who is blind because they assume the person cannot use a computer. Someone may speak very slowly and loudly to someone with a speech disability because they assume the person cannot understand them. Someone may assume that employment

accommodations for persons with disabilities involve significant costs, resources, and time, even though this is not necessarily the case.

Technology Barriers

Technology barriers happen when technology is not accessible to persons with disabilities.

Examples: Website functions that only work when users click with a mouse, which presents a barrier for people who control their computers using speech or keyboard commands instead. Training modules that are not compatible with screen reader software.

Legal Barriers

A barrier established by or perpetuated by an act, regulation, policy or practice. This may be a legal barrier within legislation, or within departmental policies and procedures.

Example: In order to access certain services, persons may be required to provide substantial medical documentation and/or assessment, complete a form that is not available in accessible format, or complete a phone assessment or interview.

Disability

As defined in the **Accessibility Act**, disability includes a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature that, in interaction with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society.

Inclusion

As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, inclusion is the practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcome, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

Network of Disability Organizations

The Network of Disability Organizations comprises a number of community groups that work to provide advocacy, programs, and services for persons with disabilities. These organizations include: Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Mental Health Association Newfoundland and Labrador, Cerebral Palsy Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, CNIB, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador, Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador, Empower NL, Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador, Inclusion Canada Newfoundland and Labrador, Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Lifewise, Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf, Newfoundland and Labrador Brain Injury Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Down Syndrome Society, Newfoundland and Labrador Stuttering Association, People First of Canada, Schizophrenia Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, Spinal Cord Injury Newfoundland and Labrador, and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada.


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