



## 2023 Accessibility Progress Report

### 1. General

#### 1.1 Summary

The actions identified in the Council's [2023–2025 Accessibility Plan](#) demonstrate its commitment to a vibrant, sustainable, diverse and accessible arts sector. This report highlights the progress made against the actions identified in the plan.

#### 1.2 Contact information

While accessibility is a shared responsibility at the Council, the following play a more active or leadership role:

- [Accessibility Governance Committee](#)

The Accessibility Governance Committee—a senior-level committee—provides strategic oversight and direction in the development and implementation of the Council's accessibility plan with support from a core team and an Accessibility Advisory Group (see section 3.1 on role of the Accessibility Advisory Group).

The Accessibility Governance Committee makes recommendations to the Director and CEO and to the Senior Management Committee (SMC) on any matters relating to accessibility. The committee is composed of:

- Director General, Communications and Arts Engagement
- Director, Human Resources and Organizational Development
- Director, Arts Promotion
- Director, Strategic Policy and Planning
- Director, Communications
- Director, Explore and Create Program
- Director, Granting Program Operations
- Director, Corporate Technology Solutions
- Director, Creating, Knowing and Sharing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Program
- Manager, Administrative and Security Services
- Chief Financial, Administrative and Security Officer

- [Equity, Access and Outreach Office](#)

The Equity, Access and Outreach Office works to advance the guiding principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and access throughout the Canada Council to positively impact the Canadian arts sector and through it, the general public. The Manager of the Equity, Access and Outreach Office, along with the Disability Arts Officer, guide,

contribute to and coordinate the development and implementation of the Council's Deaf and disability arts strategies.

### 1.3 Contact information and feedback process

Feedback about accessibility at the Council and about this report is welcomed from all employees and members of the public. Feedback can be sent anonymously. The Council is committed to reviewing and addressing all barriers identified. The feedback received is collected and kept by:

Officer, Strategic Policy and Planning section

Feedback can be provided to this office in the following ways:

By email: [feedback@canadacouncil.ca](mailto:feedback@canadacouncil.ca)

By phone: 1-800-263-5588 (toll-free), extension 5089

By mail:

Public Feedback

Canada Council for the Arts

P.O. box 1047

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8

Information on [how to submit feedback](#) is also available on the Council's public website as well as on the Council's intranet site for employees.

### 1.4 Alternative formats

Alternative formats of this report and a description of the feedback process can be requested by contacting:

Officer, Strategic Policy and Planning section

Email: [feedback@canadacouncil.ca](mailto:feedback@canadacouncil.ca)

Phone: 1 800 566-4414 (toll-free), extension 5089

Mail: P.O. box 1047, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8

The Council commits to providing the following alternative formats within 15 business days of receiving a request:

- Print
- Large print (increased font size)

## 1.5 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this report:

**Deaf communities:** Refers to people with hearing loss, or who are hard-of-hearing, oral-deaf, deaf-blind and late-deafened, many of whom identify as culturally Deaf—sharing distinct sign languages, traditions, histories and values.

**Disability communities:** Refers to people living with physical or intellectual disabilities, mental or chronic illness, or neurodivergence who experience discrimination and disadvantage. Disabilities can be long-term, temporary or fluctuating.

**Barrier:** Refers to anything that might hinder full and equal participation by people living with disabilities. Barriers can be architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or the result of a policy or procedure.

**Accessibility:** Refers to the design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies and rules in a way that allows all people, including people living with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

## 2. Areas described in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*

### 2.1 Built environment

#### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2023, the Council will update its written emergency evacuation policy to outline processes specific to people with disabilities.</li></ul>	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2023, the Council will develop and distribute communications products on the accessibility of our offices.</li></ul>	Completed

The Council developed an emergency evacuation plan with specific processes for people who are Deaf or are living with disabilities.

The Council developed and implemented communications products across the organization on the accessibility of its offices. Employees can request ergonomic assessments of their workspaces.

## 2.2 Employment

### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2024, the Council will create a strategy to hire and retain more people who have disabilities in consultation with people who have disabilities.</li></ul>	In progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>As we roll out our new portal for job application management and tracking, we will collect feedback about the new system from people with disabilities and make accessibility-related improvements to the system as well as to related processes and tools.</li></ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Also, as part of the roll-out, we will conduct a review of the user experience of applying for a job at the Council and make improvements to that experience based on the results of the review.</li></ul>	Not yet started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2023, we will review processes for employees and potential employees to self-identify as having a disability and be clear on why we are collecting this information and how it will be used.</li></ul>	Completed

In March 2023, the Council launched its new Talent Acquisition Management System, which aims to support relationship management with job applicants and enhance the candidate experience by providing a web portal to facilitate access to candidate profile information, job alerts, resumes and application submissions, communications and more. The system offers greater accessibility, since the application form is no longer in PDF, and the entire process is more accessible through the web portal that was designed to meet accessibility compliance standards. Feedback received on the new system can be found in section 4.

In alignment with the requirements of the *Employment Equity Act* as well as the Council's 2022–2025 Employment Equity Action Plan, the Council launched a self-identification campaign in April 2023 and reviewed the self-identification questionnaire for employees to increase the depth and breadth of the data collected. The revised questionnaire includes self-identification groups/questions that go beyond the traditional four groups covered under employment equity legislation (women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities). The wording also aligns with the Council's 2021–2026 Strategic Plan and its commitments. Employees were informed of the purpose for which the Council collects this information and how it will be used. The Council also has a self-identification questionnaire for job applicants that mirrors the questionnaire for employees.

On May 26, 2023, the Council took part in a virtual career fair for persons living with disabilities organized by the [Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion](#). The virtual, interactive and accessible event was free and open to all Canadians and aligned with the Council's goal of increasing representation of persons living with disabilities in the organization. On November 9, 2023, the Council also took part in a Career Fair for students and recent graduates living with disabilities organized by the Treasury Board Secretariat for persons living with disabilities.

## 2.3 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2025, the Council will conduct an accessibility audit of its public website and any IT systems that are not scheduled for replacement in the next three years. The audit will pay special attention to the technical accessibility requirements as well as the ease of the end user's experience and navigation throughout its websites. It will also include the assessment and approval of new technology related to the submission and review of grant applications.</li></ul>	In progress

While the accessibility audit of the Council's public website and IT systems has not yet begun, accessibility has been identified as a key requirement for all new solutions being implemented across the Council.

An accessibility review was conducted on the Public Lending Right program Windows desktop application and updates were made in the fall of 2023.

## 2.4 Communications, other than ICT

### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2024, the Council will develop guidelines for accessibility at internal (employees only) and public meetings. The guidelines will cover both virtual and in-person meetings. Once the guidelines are developed, the Council will provide employees with training on how to action the guidelines.</li></ul>	Not yet started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2025, the Council will make sure that employees who write public documents for the Council receive training on how to write in plain language.</li></ul>	In progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By the end of 2024, the Council will develop and distribute guidelines on how to create accessible online content and documents. Employees who create online content will be informed of the guidelines and will be provided with training, as required.</li></ul>	In progress

The Council has developed an organization-wide style guide. The guide is intended to serve as a reference on language and writing style, with an emphasis on best practices for accessible, inclusive and equitable language. The guide, which is a living document and continuously evolving to reflect best practices, is available to all Council employees and supplemented with orientation sessions to encourage its adoption.

## 2.5 The procurement of goods, services and facilities

### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2025, the Council will complete a review of its procurement processes and make any necessary changes. During the review, it will look for opportunities to increase the accessibility of the products and services we buy. For example, we may add more instructions about accessibility into our procurement policy and checklists.</li> </ul>	In progress

The procurement policy and processes are currently being developed to ensure accessibility, such as creating more opportunities for Indigenous businesses. The Canada Council is also seeking best practices among other organizations.

## 2.6 The design and delivery of programs and services

### Where we are and what we have done

Commitment	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By the end of 2025, the Council will conduct a detailed review of its delivery model for grants and prizes. The goal of the review is to make the Council and its activities more accessible to applicants. During the review, we plan to focus strongly on the experience of Deaf and disability artists when they apply for grants and participate in our programs. We will conduct the review, taking into consideration the needs of artists who are Deaf or have disabilities, and we plan to make improvements to our delivery model based on the feedback we receive. This will include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of the language and text that we use to describe our programs and services.</li> <li>The improvement of customer service provided during the grant and prize application process.</li> <li>Reviews for our Application Assistance mechanism and Access Support program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	In progress

The Council has undertaken several important equity- and accessibility-related initiatives, including:

- A review of the language used in the Council’s program guidelines and forms, with the aim of using clear, simple language. Council employees are acquiring the necessary skills to update forms to make them accessible, including plain language and simplified processes.
- The development of client supports, including accessible ‘how-to’ tools, as part of an initiative to increase access to Council funding. To date, the Council has begun to create easy-to-use, accessible tools to help applicants navigate the portal, apply to become an assessor and apply for funding.
- The Council is developing an outreach framework to help the Arts Granting Programs to support communities by learning about the Council and its grant

application processes. The outreach framework prioritizes designated priority groups and communities, including Deaf and disability arts and artists.

- A working group has been struck to research alternate formats for submitting applications to the Council. This could include video and/or audio formats.
- The Council continues work to review its Access Support program. During the year, a working group was formed to look at the Council's current model of delivery, using a human-centered design methodology for Access Support. The learnings and recommendations of this work will be used in the next steps in redesigning the program.
- Continued work on projects related to the [Expanding the Arts: Deaf and Disability Expression and Engagement Strategy \(ETA II\)](#). The ETA II articulates the Council's approach to supporting the Deaf and disability arts sector in the context of the strategic plan and its funding programs. It focuses on deepening the Council's impact on the Deaf and disability arts sector by supporting the expression and expanding the engagement of people who are Deaf and/or are living with disabilities.
- The distribution of \$9.2 million in recovery funding—through Canadian Heritage's Canada Arts and Culture Recovery Program (CACRP)—to core-funded organizations from designated priority groups (Indigenous, racialized, Deaf and disability, and official language minority communities) to ensure that funding reaches artists and workers from these communities.

In November 2023, the Council's Manager of the Equity, Access and Outreach team made a presentation at the 2023 Grantmakers in the Arts Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, entitled *Centering intersectionality and the co-creation of access for Deaf and disability communities*. Some of the topics covered in the presentation included applying a disability justice lens to funding for Deaf and disability arts.

This year, the Canada Council's Art Bank launched an open call to purchase works with the goal of including a greater diversity of artists and prioritizing the acquisition of works by artists previously not included in the Art Bank collection and who self-identify as Deaf or living with a disability. Out of the 72 new works of art acquired, 12 of the artists, duos or collectives self-identified as being Deaf and/or living with a disability.

## 2.7 Transportation

The Council does not run any transportation services; therefore, it has not developed any goals or actions in this area.

## 3. Consultations

The Council continues to consult people who are Deaf or are living with disabilities in all aspects of the implementation of its accessibility plan and other major projects. This includes:



### 3.1 Consultations with employees who have disabilities

The Council created an Accessibility Advisory Group to provide a forum for employees of the Canada Council for the Arts to foster dialogue, share information and ideas, and propose solutions to help identify, address and prevent barriers in the Council's programs, services, systems and operations. Group members have self-identified as Deaf or living with a disability, have had experience with a Deaf person or a person living with a disability, or work with artists and arts organizations from the Deaf and disability community.

The group's objective is to help the Council become more open and equitable through an informed dialogue on accessibility. The group reports to and works in collaboration with the Accessibility Governance Committee (listed in Section 1.2 Contact Information). The intent is to obtain input from employees who have identified as living with a disability or who have first-hand experience in dealing with a disability.

The Accessibility Advisory Group:

- Provides feedback to the Accessibility Governance Committee on the progress against the Council's Accessibility Plan.
- Contributes to staff engagement activities on topics related to accessibility.

The advice and comments provided by the Accessibility Advisory Group have been integrated in this progress report.

### 3.2 Consultations with stakeholders, Deaf people and people living with disabilities

Consultations with stakeholders, Deaf people and people living with disabilities will be carried out according to the actions and timelines identified in the Council's Accessibility Plan.

## 4. Feedback

Comments, questions and complaints received between January and December 2023 related to:

- Accessibility related content and its positioning on the Council's website.
- The steps to follow to apply for a grant, confirming the need to provide applicant supports as identified in the Council's Accessibility Plan.
- The addition of contact information for Access Support on the website.
- Accessibility barriers and ease of use of the new career portal.
- Supporting the costs of sign language interpretation to attend a networking event.
- The criteria for the Travel component in the *Arts Abroad* program and in the *Arts Across Canada* program, more specifically the criterion limiting grant applications to one per year, which poses a problem for Deaf artists when Deaf arts events and festivals are scheduled at different times within the year and often with little advance notice.



## 5. What the Council has learned

Through analysis of its workforce data and feedback received, the Council has identified the following areas where barriers remain and must be addressed, removed or considered as part of the next Accessibility Plan:

- Exploring user testing with peer assessors as users of Council systems to identify any accessibility needs that may come up for that group in the peer assessment process. This could include:
  - The Online Assessment Site
  - Scoresheet tools
  - Virtual meeting tools
- Developing an accessibility and accommodation policy for peer assessors.
- Developing accessibility guidelines for outreach activities.
- Reviewing Application Assistance, which contributes to costs for services to help applicants with the grant application process.
- Continuing to ensure the job application process and related tools and technology are barrier-free.

## 6. Engagement, Awareness and Training

Sensitivity training was provided to Council employees and managers in the past year, including *Disability Inclusion & Barriers to Accessibility*, *Inclusive Hiring Practices*, *Overcoming Unconscious Bias in the Workplace*, and *Positive Space*, an information session on creating a safe and inclusive workplace for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

In March 2023, the Council organized two employee engagement and learning events on the theme of disability justice, offering an opportunity to learn more about this movement that, in contrast to disability rights, emphasizes the collective over the individual and calls for the leadership of communities most impacted by intersecting systems of oppression towards collective liberation.

## 7. Conclusion

The *Accessible Canada Act* provides an excellent opportunity for the Council to deliver on its commitment to provide programs, services and a work environment that is accessible to all people in Canada.

The Council will continue to listen and learn from those who have extensive experience working with the disability arts community and welcome requests, recommendations and contributions from employees, artists, groups and organizations that are at the heart of Deaf and disability arts practices in Canada.