



CIHR Accessibility Plan

2026-2028

CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) Accessibility Plan 2026-2028

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Document availability

This publication is available in HTML format on the CIHR website. This page will also include download links for other formats, when available.

To request a paper copy of the document in English, French or in an alternate format (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD, or DAISY):

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General

CIHR has prepared this Accessibility Plan in accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible Canada Regulations* (ACR). This plan outlines our ongoing efforts to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in our policies, programs, practices, and services.

Progress reports are required annually on the anniversary of the plan, except in years when a new or updated plan is published [ACR s. 13]. As such, no progress report is required in 2025. However, barriers and actions not yet completed have been rolled forward into this renewed Accessibility Plan 2026-2028, and CIHR will continue to monitor and report on progress in future progress reports.

CIHR is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all, including employees, researchers, and the public. As Canada's federal health research funding agency, we aim to make our workplace and the services we deliver barrier-free by integrating accessibility principles into every aspect of our operations.

Please send your feedback to the Deputy Director of Strategic Programs and Human Resources Analytics.

You can send your feedback by email, phone, or mail using the contact information listed below.

For more information on how you can send your feedback, see [our feedback process description](#) or refer to the *Feedback on the CIHR Accessibility Plan* section below.

You can use the contact information listed below to request a copy of our accessibility plan and our feedback process description in these alternate formats: print, large print, Braille, audio or an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist persons with disabilities. We will provide the format you ask for as soon as possible. Braille and audio formats may take up to 45 days. Print, large print and electronic formats may take up to 15 days.

Feedback on the CIHR Accessibility Plan

You can use our feedback process to provide your feedback on:

- Barriers when dealing with CIHR; and
- How we are implementing our Accessibility Plan.

Feedback can also be provided on:

- How we can remove identified barriers;
- The content or structure of our Accessibility Plan; and

- The feedback process itself.

Please send your feedback to the Deputy Director Strategic Programs and Human Resources Analytics.

You can send your feedback by email, phone or mail using the contact information listed below. You can also send your feedback anonymously. We will acknowledge receipt of your feedback in the same way you sent us your feedback, unless the feedback was provided anonymously.

You can also contact us to request a copy of our accessibility plan and our feedback process description in these **alternate formats**: print, large print, Braille, audio or an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology intended to assist persons with disabilities. We will provide the format you ask for as soon as possible. Braille and audio formats may take up to 45 days. Print, large print and electronic formats may take up to 15 days

We will use the feedback we receive to:

- Track and monitor barriers within CIHR;
- Present findings to internal working groups;
- Inform next steps and future consultations;
- Support the preparation of progress reports and updates to our next Accessibility Plan;
- Respond to and resolve accessibility-related issues in a timely and confidential manner.

Contact Information:

CIHR employees and persons (clients, suppliers, members of the public) may provide feedback as follows:

- By email
 - AccessibilityPlan-PlanAccessibilite@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
- By telephone
 - Monday to Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time
 - Telephone: 613-954-1698
 - Toll Free: 1-888-603-4178
- In writing (mail)
 - Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Human Resources Branch
Deputy Director of Strategic Programs and Human Resources Analytics
234 Laurier Ave West

Address Locator 4809A
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9
Canada

- Anonymously
 - Complete the [online form \(Link opens in new window\)](#) to share feedback anonymously

This contact information enables CIHR employees and the public to:

- request the CIHR Accessibility Plan in one of the alternate formats described in [subsection 8\(2\) of the regulations](#).
- request the description of the CIHR feedback process in one of the alternate formats described in [subsection 9\(5\) of the regulations](#).

Consultations

In preparing this Accessibility Plan and our feedback process description, CIHR consulted with persons with disabilities, along with other internal and external working groups with expertise in accessibility, equity, and inclusion. These consultations ensured that a diverse range of perspectives and lived experiences informed the identification of barriers and the development of meaningful, practical solutions.

Who we consulted:

Persons with Disabilities Network

CIHR's Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network, made up of employees who have experienced or witnessed accessibility barriers. The PWD network has informed key initiatives since the development of the 2023–2026 Accessibility Plan and its subsequent progress report.

How we consulted the Persons with Disabilities Network:

- Discussion groups online
- Email submissions

Dates / time periods of consultations:

- May 2, 2025 – Introductory meeting with the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network to mark the renewal of its membership.
- July 9–10, 2025 – Dedicated online consultations with the PWD Network to review each barrier identified in the draft 2026-2028 Accessibility Plan.
- Ongoing – feedback is also accepted by email from members who were unable to attend consultations or preferred to share input in writing.

We asked participants the following questions:

- Do you agree with the barriers identified in the draft Accessibility Plan?
- Are there any barriers that are missing or unclear?
- Are the proposed actions appropriate and meaningful?
- What changes would you recommend?

Accessibility:

To help ensure an accessible consultation process, CIHR provided multiple ways for participants to share their feedback based on their individual needs and preferences. Participants were invited to:

- Send feedback by email
- Leave comments in writing directly in the shared document
- Request a one-on-one discussion

Public Consultation

CIHR consulted members of the public through the External Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Systemic Ableism (EAC–ASA), including researchers, trainees, patients, community partners, and allies with lived or observed experience of accessibility barriers. Insights directly informed the [CIHR Anti-Ableism Action Plan](#), providing evidence on accessibility barriers and systemic ableism in health research, and guiding recommendations for more inclusive practices and policies.

How we consulted the public:

- [Surveys](#)
- [Discussion groups](#) (online)

Dates / time periods of consultations:

- Fall 2023 – CIHR hosted an online survey on ableism and barriers to accessibility in the health research funding system.
- June–October 2022 – Eight virtual discussion sessions were held from June to October 2022.

We asked participants the following questions:

- What barriers have you experienced when applying to CIHR grants or awards, and how can the application process be made more accessible and inclusive?
- What challenges have you faced during the peer review of your application?

- What barriers have you experienced as a peer reviewer (or potential reviewer), and how can the peer review process be made more accessible and inclusive?
- What barriers have you faced in using CIHR funds, and how can funding rules be made more accessible and inclusive?

Accessibility:

The survey was made available in English, French, American Sign Language (ASL), and Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ). Participants in the two part-virtual discussion sessions were compensated for their contributions. All sessions included live CART captioning and sign language interpretation (ASL and LSQ). Additional accessibility supports were considered upon request, on a case-by-case basis.

CIHR Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (CAREDIA) Committee

The CAREDIA committee is composed of employees whose experiences and expertise ensure that a wide range of perspectives are considered when advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion at CIHR.

How we consulted CAREDIA

- Discussion groups online
- Email submissions

Dates / time periods of consultations:

- Virtual discussions were held July 24, 2025.

We asked participants the following questions:

- Do you agree with the barriers identified in the draft Accessibility Plan?
- Are there any barriers that are missing or unclear?
- Are the proposed actions appropriate and meaningful?
- What changes would you recommend?
- The language in the Accessibility Plan must be clear and concise – are there any areas that require further explanation?

Accessibility:

To help ensure an accessible consultation process, CIHR provided multiple ways for participants to share their feedback based on their individual needs and preferences. Participants were invited to:

- Send feedback by email
- Leave comments directly in the consultation document
- Request a one-on-one discussion.

Other Consulting Groups

CIHR Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee

The OHS Committee – composed of managers, employees, and experts from HR, Facilities, and Security – provided feedback on accessibility progress and barriers through targeted consultations.

CIHR Accessibility Plan Working Group

The CIHR Accessibility Plan Working Group – composed of business leads from key functional areas – served as subject matter experts responsible for actions related to their respective barriers.

CIHR Governance

CIHR's internal governance bodies advance accessibility through oversight, barrier identification, and accountability.

- Decision-making is led by the President, with implementation supported by executives and managers through the Senior Leadership Committee (SLC).
- The Senior Operations Committee (SOC) receives quarterly updates on the Accessibility Plan and provides guidance on its progress.

External Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Systemic Ableism (EAC – ASA)

The EAC-ASA – composed of researchers with disabilities, allies, advocates, community leaders, and Indigenous representatives – advised CIHR from 2022–2024 on barriers to accessibility and systemic ableism, leading to the [CIHR Anti-Ableism Action Plan](#). The Anti-Ableism Action Plan complements the Accessibility Plan by expanding efforts to remove barriers in CIHR programs and funding systems, with committee findings integrated into the renewed Accessibility Plan.

Collaboration with Federal Granting Agencies – Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

CIHR collaborated with NSERC and SSHRC throughout the Accessibility Plan's development to ensure alignment, consistency, and coordinated efforts, strengthening collective commitment to advancing accessibility.

Areas in Section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

Organizational Culture

Barrier 1:

Limited formal opportunities exist for employees with lived experience or who have witnessed accessibility barriers to share feedback and contribute to improving organizational practices and culture.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue to support the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network by welcoming new members and fostering an inclusive space for open dialogue and advocacy.
- Formalize the Network's Terms of Reference to clearly outline its mission, goals, and expectations for participation, strengthening impact and accountability.
- Encourage greater engagement between the Network and senior executives, including participation in various governance meetings, to ensure ongoing dialogue and visibility at all levels of the organization.
- Review how meetings are conducted to ensure accessibility for employees with hearing or visual impairments and implement best practices to make all interactions more inclusive.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Hold and document four quarterly meetings annually with the Persons with Disabilities Network

2026–2027: Complete a formal assessment and proposal outlining steps to formalize the Persons with Disabilities Network, including recommended structure, leadership roles, and terms of reference

Lead: Human Resources

Barrier 2:

CIHR employees lack overall awareness of accessibility practices in the workplace. Examples of this barrier include:

- Providing documents in accessible formats.

- Limited awareness about the Ombud's role, its services, and how to access support for accessibility-related concerns.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue delivering the annual Accessibility Awareness Campaign to increase understanding of accessibility in the workplace.
- Promote accessibility feedback channels by explaining their purpose and clarifying how and where employees can provide input. All feedback will be summarized and reported in the annual Accessibility Plan progress report.
- Share relevant resources and highlight available tools and supports.
- Actively promote Ombuds services as a confidential, impartial resource for employees to address accessibility and employment-related concerns.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Continue holding and promoting the annual Accessibility Campaign.

2027–2028: Measure employee engagement in subsequent Progress Reports.

Lead: Human Resources

Barrier 3:

Employees have varying levels of understanding of accessibility standards, which can affect their ability to effectively support persons with disabilities and incorporate accessibility practices into their work.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Require all employees, including managers, to complete mandatory accessibility training annually.
- Explore additional targeted training and resources for managers to strengthen their capacity to support accessibility in their teams.
- Include accessibility resources in the employee onboarding program.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Annually revise mandatory training to include accessibility training.

2027–2028: Report the percentage of employees who have completed the training in subsequent Progress Reports.

Lead: Human Resources

Support: Communications

Employment

Barrier 1:

Employees have limited understanding of why and how to self-identify, leading to low engagement with self-identification processes beyond initial recruitment. Employees may also be hesitant to self-identify due to privacy concerns.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue promoting the value and benefits of self-identification to CIHR employees.
- Ensure that self-identification materials and forms are available in accessible formats to support participation by all employees.
- Increase employee awareness of how self-identification data is used, stored, and protected to ensure confidence in the privacy of their information.

Timeline:

2026–2027: Promote employee self-identification through a campaign.

2027–2028: Include campaign results in subsequent Progress Reports - including yearly percentage changes in the number of employees who self-identify.

Lead: Human Resources

Support: Communications

Barrier 2:

The workplace accommodation process is unclear, leading to confusion and delays, particularly for employees who need assistive technologies but do not know how to access them.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Finalize, publish and promote the accommodation process.
- Provide clear guidance on access to assistive technologies.
- Identify and promote targeted training for managers on implementing the Duty to Accommodate (DTA) policy to ensure consistent and informed application across teams.
- Review delegation of authority related to the DTA process to identify opportunities for clarification or improvement.
- Collect employee feedback through the Accessibility Plan feedback channels, along with input from governance channels, to continuously refine the workplace accommodation communication strategy and support a two-way dialogue.

Timeline:

2025–2026: Develop and launch a workplace accommodation communication strategy.

2027–2028: Collect and analyze feedback from both managers and employees who have engaged with the workplace accommodation process to identify areas for improvement.

Lead: Human Resources

Support: Communications

Barrier 3:

Employees on long-term leave lose system access due to security policies, limiting their ability to stay informed or access supports; managers have limited tools to assist during this time.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Finalize, publish, and promote a workplace support initiative that strengthens direct conversations between employees (including those on leave) and their managers.

Timeline:

2026–2027: Finalize development of the workplace support initiatives.

2027–2028: Publish and implement a promotion strategy.

Lead: Human Resources

Support: Communications

Barrier 4:

There is perceived lack of understanding at the management level about the importance and benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue to equip managers with ongoing guidance and communication on inclusive recruitment and career progression and development practices supporting employees with disabilities.
- Explore opportunities to provide awareness training for managers on the benefits and value of hiring persons with disabilities

- Conduct further analysis to understand why some employees perceive a lack of understanding at the management level regarding the importance and benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.
- Use the findings to inform targeted awareness, training, or communication strategies to address these perceptions and reinforce inclusive hiring practices.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Provide managers with ongoing guidance on inclusive recruitment and career development for employees with disabilities.

2026–2027: Promote employment equity and inclusive hiring.

Lead: Human Resources

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Barrier 1:

Employees are not sufficiently aware of the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) services.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue promoting AAACCT as the central resource for employee services and digital accessibility tools, while tracking engagement to inform future communication strategies.

Timeline:

2026–2027: Promote AAACCT services to CIHR employees.

2027–2028: Report on the Progress Report the number of employees who are accessing AAACCT services.

Lead: Communications

Support: Information Technology

Barrier 2:

Some users may experience limitations in accessing CIHR's website and intranet tools due to ongoing technological constraints, despite alignment with accessibility best practices.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Continue to ensure CIHR webpages are as accessible as possible and aligned with current accessibility practices, recognizing ongoing technological limitations.
- Make improvements where feasible and practical, while preparing for migration to the new Canada.ca platform, which will supersede current pages.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Promote Accessibility Feedback Channels at least once per year to encourage employees to report inaccessible web tools or content.

2027–2028: Report on feedback received through these channels in the Progress Report and use it to guide website updates.

Lead: Communications

Support: Information Technology

Barrier 3:

Paper records are not accessible.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Complete digitization of paper records to improve accessibility.

Timeline:

2026–2027: 90% of digitization completed.

2027–2028: 100% digitization completed.

Lead: Information Technology

Support: Records Management

Communication, other than information and communication technologies

Barrier 1:

Employees may encounter inaccessible information that hinders their ability to work effectively.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Communications advisors will participate in external Accessibility Communications Working Groups to stay informed of best practices supporting the creation of more accessible communications across the organization.
- Promote training and learning resources on creating accessible documents.
- Encourage employees to flag inaccessible communication tools or content through the Accessibility Plan feedback channels.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Share accessibility best practices across CIHR on an ongoing basis (e.g., number of resources distributed, webpage engagement).

Lead: Communications

Support: Human Resources

Barrier 2:

Internal CIHR governance documents are not always accessible.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Assess the accessibility of current governance documents and ensure all such documents are as accessible as possible.

Timeline:

2026–2027: Conduct a review of governance documents to establish realistic deadlines for improvements.

2027–2028: Update governance documents identified in the review to meet accessibility standards.

Lead: Governance

Support: Communications

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Barrier 1:

Limited information on accessibility-related supports hinders the participation of persons with disabilities in CIHR programs and initiatives.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Identify existing accessibility-related supports available to all individuals interacting with CIHR (e.g., applicants, reviewers, advisory committee members, community members) and create and promote a centralized webpage to share this information.
- Update Contact Centre FAQs with information on accessibility supports.
- Develop standard CIHR practices that support participation of persons with disabilities in CIHR business processes, including:
 - Compensation for time and expertise; and

- Reimbursement for accessibility-related expenses.
- Create and promote practical guidance on supports for persons with disabilities and inclusive research practices in the design of research proposals, including:
 - Accessibility-related expenses for researchers with disabilities, for example, clarifying those that are the responsibility of the employer and those that are responsibility of the funding agency; and
 - Examples of expenses in project budgets for inclusive research design and conduct.

Timeline:

- 2026–2027: Webpage and updated Contact Centre FAQs are launched.
- 2027–CIHR-wide compensation policy is released.
- 2028–Guidance is provided on the eligibility of accessibility expenses.

Lead: Science Strategy Branch

Support: Communications, Program Design and Delivery, Operations Support, Colleagues from NSERC/SSHRC

Barrier 2:

There is a lack of knowledge on how to appropriately consider the impacts of disability, accessibility and anti-ableism in health research and on health.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

Develop guidance with clear examples on how and when to consider disability, accessibility, and anti-ableism in health research and their impacts on health:

- For CIHR staff when developing funding opportunities.
- For applicants when preparing applications.
- For reviewers during application assessments.

Timeline:

- 2026–2028 and beyond: Updated guidelines for staff, applicants, and reviewers are released.

Lead: Science Strategy Branch

Support: College of Reviewers, Program Design and Delivery and Communications

Barrier 3:

Fear of disclosure and implicit biases against persons with disabilities limit their access to, and participation in, the CIHR funding system.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Enhance communications about the purpose of collecting self-identification (self-ID) data and how it informs CIHR programs and initiatives.
- Publish trend data for application and funding rates for persons with disabilities in CIHR's Project Grant Competition.
- Update the CIHR Bias in Peer Review module to include content on disability, accessibility, and ableism.

Timeline:

- 2026 and ongoing: Disaggregated self-ID data from Project Grant competitions are published on a semi-annual basis.
- 2026–2027: Updated Bias in Peer Review module is launched.

Lead: Science Strategy Branch

Support: College of Reviewers, Program Design and Delivery, Operations Support and Communications

Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Barrier 1:

Accessibility considerations are often overlooked by business owners when initiating a procurement request.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Promote procurement training through internal communication channels and clarify the intended audience.
- Add a mandatory checkbox to the Internal Requisition Form: “Yes/No – Have you considered accessibility?” This will require business owners (clients) to confirm that accessibility considerations have been addressed.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Promote procurement training annually through internal communication channels.

Lead: Procurement
Support: Communications

Barrier 2:

Employees have difficulty accessing information on accessible procurement.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Add a one-stop “Accessibility” link on the Procurement intranet page, including a direct link to Public Services and Procurement Canada “How to Consider Accessibility in Procurement” YouTube video.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Promote at least once procurement accessibility resources.

Lead: Procurement
Support: Communications

Barrier 3:

Employees are unaware of existing contracts and standing offers, including those for accessible services.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Promote accessibility-related standing offers through internal communications.
- Host annual information sessions for all employees on accessibility-related standing offers.
- Update the procurement team’s group inbox automatic reply to include the following message: “Make your meetings accessible with standing offers for accessible services, including interpretation and captioning.”

Timeline:

2026–2028: Host one annual training session for all employees on standing offers, including accessibility-related services, and promote these offers through internal communications.

Lead: Procurement
Support: Communications

Barrier 4:

CIHR's procurement team does not have a structured process to develop expertise in accessible procurement or to exchange best practices with other departments.

CIHR will do the following to remove and prevent those barriers:

- Enroll all CIHR procurement officers in Public Services and Procurement Canada's Agents of Change for Accessible Procurement Network and require active participation in workshops.

Timeline:

2026–2028: Ensure CIHR procurement officers have enrolled in PSPC's Agents of Change for Accessible Procurement Network and track workshop attendance.

2027–2028: Report on workshop attendance in subsequent progress report.

Lead: Procurement

Transportation

No barriers have yet been identified.

At the time of the consultations for the 2026–2028 Accessibility Plan, most employees were teleworking and had not yet transitioned to the new building. As a result, CIHR had not identified any transportation-related barriers. Now that employees are on-site, we will engage with the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network and consult with employees to identify and address any potential barriers of transportation options (e.g., parking, shuttle services, public transit access) and share findings.

Built Environment

No barriers have yet been identified.

At the time of the consultations for the 2026–2028 Accessibility Plan, most employees were teleworking and had not yet transitioned to the new building. As a result, CIHR had not identified any barriers related to the built environment. Now that employees are on-site, CIHR will engage with the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network and consult with all employees to identify and address any potential accessibility barriers within the new workspace, including reviewing emergency protocols, doing a building walk-through to identify missing signage, etc

Conclusion

CIHR is committed to building an accessible and inclusive organization in support of the Government of Canada's goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This Accessibility Plan

renewal sets out our commitments and actions to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for employees, applicants, stakeholders, and partners.

With the October 2025 relocation to 234 Laurier Avenue, CIHR will address new accessibility challenges, ensuring that the new workplace remains inclusive and supportive. By collaborating with employees, persons with disabilities, and the broader community, CIHR will continue advancing an accessible and inclusive future.

CIHR will publish annual progress reports on the implementation of this plan, which will highlight achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. Feedback received through our accessibility feedback process will be actively reviewed, acknowledged, and incorporated into decision-making.