

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Plan 2024-26 2024 Year-End Review

Introduction

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to building a more inclusive and accessible province for all residents. This year-end review outlines the progress made in 2024 toward achieving the nine (9) goals set out in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Accessibility Plan for 2024-26. Each goal identifies a lead department, a timeline for completion, and specific actions to guide implementation. To monitor progress, yearly indicators were established for each goal. The updates below summarize the work completed or initiated in 2024, based on the indicators set for that year.

These goals were developed using a cross-disability lens, informed by common themes identified across departments and with contributions from key stakeholders including persons with disabilities as well as organizations of and for persons with disabilities. These goals are designed to improve accessibility throughout Provincial Government policies, programs, and services.

Work will continue throughout 2025 and 2026 to further advance the goals of the Accessibility Plan.

Goal One: Increase Accessibility/Disability Training Opportunities

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission; Department of Social Supports and Well-Being.

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 Social Supports and Well-Being will develop new accessibility/disability related training in collaboration with organizations of and for persons with disabilities.

Year-End Update:

- Two training programs are under development:
 - The Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Centre of Learning and Development (CLD) are supporting the Disability Policy Office (DPO) in the design, development and implementation of an eLearning product for public servants on Accessibility Awareness and Action Planning. This course provides information on the **Accessibility Act**, accessibility plans and how to build accessibility into our work environments, policies and programs. The Accessibility Awareness and Planning eLearning course has been drafted and is undergoing final revisions, which includes ensuring that accessibility features are integrated in the course such as captioning, navigation, and plain language.
 - CLD and DPO are collaborating to develop a Disability and Accessibility Awareness eLearning product for public servants. This training will have multiple modules exploring disability and accessibility awareness for public servants. CLD and DPO have held four (4) consultations with the Network of Disability Organizations (Network) and have shared a course outline with the Network. CLD is actively working on finalizing content in conjunction with DPO. Resources and materials have been requested from the Network to be included in the course content as appropriate.

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.

Year-End Update:

- Following the CLD's assessment of the current course catalog, CLD determined twenty (20) courses are eligible to be updated to the new RISE eLearning authoring software to promote greater compliance with accessibility.
- New programs are developed in RISE eLearning authoring software.
- The following eLearning courses for public servants have been updated to enhance accessibility with the new RISE eLearning software: Fraud Prevention and Detection; Fostering a Harassment Free Workplace; Internal Controls and Green Procurement.

Goal Three: Ensure Application of Accessible Communications Policy

Lead Department(s): Communications Branch

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 Branch 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.

Year-End Update:

- An oversight committee has been formed to ensure consistent application of the Accessible Communications Policy.
- The Accessible Communications Policy has been revised and is in the final stage of the review process. Once finalized, it will be posted on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website.
- The development of the online accessibility resource was completed by December 31, 2024, and is now undergoing content and peer reviews by the Web Services Team and the Communication and Brand Office of Executive Council.

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.

Year-End Update:

- Before deploying Microsoft 365 (M365), all departments across Government received training on M365, with accessibility features integrated into each session. A dedicated accessibility tab was introduced on the Welcome to M365 Teams site to provide ongoing support and resources. Additional training was delivered to executive teams across Government, and the following departments have completed training:

Department	Audience	Date of M365 Training
Communications Branch	Exec	July 17, 2024
Government Services	Exec	July 18, 2024
LA	Exec	August 12, 2024
TBS	Exec	September 23, 2024
JGRD	Exec	October 10, 2024
SSWB	Directors	October 23, 2024
TI	Exec	November 25, 2024
SSWB	Exec	January 22, 2025

- A series of webinars for all Government staff on a variety of M365 topics, including accessibility features, launched on April 28, 2025, through the Welcome to M365 site.

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 twenty (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.

Year-End Update:

- All site visits have been completed, and reports have been received for all 20 buildings included in the study.

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 (SBC) 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.

Year-End Update:

- Disability awareness components have been integrated into the existing SBC training, with further enhancements under consideration.
- PSC will share links to relevant online training on disability-focused materials to SBCs. By completing these courses, SBCs will be better informed on best practices relating to accessibility and accommodations that may be requested during the interview process.
- Progress is being made in collaboration with CLD to explore how existing PSAcces course offerings can be made available to SBCs within Delegated Staffing Authorities.
- The PowerPoint used in SBC training has been reviewed and improved to include a stronger focus on disability awareness. A new slide on accessibility and inclusion has been added. It includes:
 - A link to Words with Dignity, a guide on respectful terminology for referencing people with disabilities.
 - Examples of disability-related accommodations, which are discussed during the session.
- SBCs are encouraged to use accessible language throughout the recruitment process, especially when developing job advertisements and interview questions.

- The training promotes inclusive interview practices, such as offering candidates a copy of the interview questions to follow along as they are read aloud.
- Attendees are provided with links to relevant online learning resources, including:
 - Communication Fundamentals
 - The Working Mind
- Links to key policy documents are also shared, including:
 - Disability Accommodations Policy
 - Accessible Communications Policy

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

Lead Department(s): Public Service Commission

The PSC 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, PSC, is currently analyzing the recruitment process with the intent to enhance accessibility.

2024 Indicator(s):

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

Year-End Update:

- PSC assessed current recruitment processes and identified opportunities to enhance accessibility. This was completed through a review with primary recruiters and recruitment management teams, as well as corporate leadership; relevant feedback was compiled, and recommendations will be made in 2025 for consideration of implementation.

Goal Eight: Improve Accessibility of Procurement Process

Lead Department(s): Public Procurement Agency

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

PPA 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, PPA will identify improvements to enhance the accessibility of bid documents.

Year-End Update:

- PPA worked with MERX and identified potential enhancements for implementation, including addition of descriptive links and reviewing bid documents to optimize for text-to-speech tools. In 2025, PPA will implement identified improvements, where practicable, to enhance the accessibility of bid documents.

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.

Year-End Update:

- An Accessibility Oversight Committee with representation from each department (accessibility leads) has been established to oversee the Provincial Government's progress in advancing accessibility goals.
- During 2024, the Accessibility Oversight Committee collaborated to advance and evaluate progress on the goals outlined in the Accessibility Plan 2024-26.