

# Veterans Affairs Canada's Accessibility Action Plan

2022-2025



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# Veterans Affairs Canada’s Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025

**Note:** As of the date of publication, this Accessibility Action Plan has been verified for accessibility. If you have any issues with this Plan, please contact the author.

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# Accessibility Action Plan

## 1 General

### 1.1 Process for receiving and dealing with accessibility-related feedback

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) (the Act) and the [Accessible Canada Regulations](#) require federally regulated entities, including VAC, to establish a process for receiving and dealing with accessibility-related feedback.

Feedback on accessibility can include your thoughts on:

- the implementation of VAC’s Accessibility Action Plan
- accessibility barriers at VAC
- how accessibility barriers at VAC can be prevented and/or removed
- accessibility best practices or success stories related to accessibility at VAC

An accessibility barrier is anything that does not allow persons with disabilities to be included and take part in all areas of life and society. Barriers prevent persons with disabilities from taking part in the same way that persons without disabilities can. The Act identifies five types of accessibility barriers:

- physical or architectural
- technological
- related to information and communications
- attitudinal
- systemic

### How to provide your feedback

#### Feedback for Veterans Affairs Canada

Please send questions or feedback related to the Department’s Accessibility Action Plan, or accessibility at VAC in general, in one of the following ways:

**Email:** [Accessibility at VAC](#)

**Phone:** Toll-free: 1-866-522-2122

TDD/TTY: 1-833-921-0071

**Mail:** Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services Branch

Veterans Affairs Canada

PO Box 7700

Charlottetown PE C1A 8M9

Attention: Director General, Human Resources

**Online:** Through the [anonymous feedback form](#) on the VAC website.

## **Feedback for the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA)**

Please send your questions or feedback related to the accessibility of BPA's service in one of the following ways:

**Email:** [Bureau of Pensions Advocates](#)

**Phone:** 1-877-228-2250

**Mail:** Bureau of Pensions Advocates Accessibility Feedback  
P.O. Box 7700  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 8M9

**Online:** Through the [anonymous feedback form](#) on the VAC website.

Please note that all feedback will be acknowledged in the same manner it was received (e.g., an email response to an email message), unless it was provided anonymously. Your feedback will be used to improve accessibility at VAC. We may address some feedback right away, or use it to develop future accessibility plans. We will include your feedback and how we used it in our progress reports.

## **Alternate formats**

Note that you can use the contact information above to request the following documents in alternate formats:

- VAC's Accessibility Action Plan
- VAC's description of its accessibility-related feedback process
- annual progress reports on the implementation of VAC's Accessibility Action Plan and how feedback is being taken into consideration

Alternate formats include:

- print
- large print (increased font size and clarity)
- Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
- audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud)
- electronic (an electronic format that is compatible with adaptive technology that is intended to assist persons with disabilities)

## **1.2 Introduction message**

On 11 July 2019, the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (Bill C-81) came into force. The Act seeks to make Canada barrier-free by 1 January 2040.

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The [Act](#) has a number of guiding principles, including that:

- Everyone must be treated with dignity.
- Everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society.
- Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures.

The Act also requires federally regulated entities to develop an Accessibility Action Plan to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers under federal jurisdiction in the following priority areas:

- employment
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces)
- information and communication technologies
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

While the Plan is a legislative requirement, this work on accessibility provides Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) with the opportunity to promote a respectful, inclusive work environment, where Veterans, clients and employees alike can participate to their full potential. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's (TBS) statistics from fiscal year 2020-2021 indicate that 7.8% of VAC employees identified as having a disability, while the workforce availability was 9%.<sup>1</sup> And, in terms of the Veterans VAC serves, we know that when compared to the general Canadian population, recently-released Veterans have a higher prevalence of physical and mental health conditions.<sup>2</sup>

VAC's Accessibility Action Plan<sup>3</sup> is the result of a thorough gap analysis and environmental scan, completed to identify areas for improvement – and related actions to take – within each of the priority areas named in the Act.

Good work is already underway. VAC has a long-standing history of serving clients with disabilities and, as such, in considering accessibility in its work. See [Section 6](#) for a list of recent actions taken to improve accessibility.

While progress is being made, VAC's Accessibility Action Plan also recognizes that there is important work to be done with respect to the Department's accessibility culture shift.

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<sup>1</sup> [Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2020 to 2021](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Life After Service Studies](#)

<sup>3</sup> Please note that VAC's Accessibility Action Plan includes the Bureau of Pensions Advocates, as well as the Office of the Veterans Ombud.

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With this in mind, VAC's Accessibility Action Plan includes an "organizational culture" section – an additional area for action that the Department has deemed a priority. Through this Plan, VAC commits to increasing accessibility-related awareness, developing accessibility-related knowledge and abilities, and fostering an environment of continuous learning and improvement. VAC will strive to make accessibility a standard part of its decision-making, its everyday thinking, and its operations.

The Department will also collaborate with persons with disabilities to incorporate accessibility in the future of work, including VAC's "hybrid work model" following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the action items outlined in this Plan reflect the Department's commitment to Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) and related GBA Plus tools and training. VAC will ensure that actions taken to improve accessibility consider the specific needs and circumstances of persons with disabilities and other intersecting identity factors.

VAC is also pleased to note the creation of a new Executive Inclusion Officer. This position, along with the Department's Champion of Inclusion, will ensure that accessibility and persons with disabilities continue to be important topics of discussion at departmental leadership tables.

VAC looks forward to implementing this first Accessibility Action Plan. In keeping with the Act, the Department will issue an updated Plan every three years, and will release yearly progress reports in between Plans. In this way, we will position ourselves for continuous improvements and success on our journey to become barrier-free by 2040.

### **1.3 Message from the Deputy Minister**

As the Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), I am pleased and humbled to present VAC's first Accessibility Action Plan. This 2022-2025 Accessibility Action Plan is the result of a Department-wide effort to identify barriers and actions to remove and prevent them, and to ensure VAC is a workplace where persons with disabilities can participate fully and equally. The Plan represents our first critical path towards becoming accessibility-confident: ensuring that as an organization, we know what accessibility means and why it matters, and that we are equipped to make the Department a more accessible and inclusive workplace and service provider. And, although this is our first Accessibility Action Plan, it will not be our last, as we join our Government of Canada colleagues in our shared [goal of realizing a barrier-free Canada by 2040](#).

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To put disability and accessibility in context, it's worth noting that in 2017, 22% of the Canadians aged 15 years and over had one or more disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Considered alongside the fact that the prevalence of disability increases with age, and that disability is the most common ground of discrimination for complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission<sup>5</sup>, it goes without saying that much work lies ahead.

As a department, we have a long and proud history serving Veterans, including those with disabilities. Moving forward, we can draw from this strong foundation in a renewed commitment to optimal accessibility for the Veterans we serve, as well as for our colleagues with disabilities.

I am proud to note that our 2022-2025 Accessibility Action Plan was developed in consultation with persons with disabilities, allowing us to put the "Nothing Without Us" principle into practice. Individuals with lived experience should have full and direct participation in decisions and the design of policies, programs, and services that will impact them.

On that note, I would like to recognize our Veterans for the sacrifices made in serving our country. VAC will continue to work to make the Department's benefits and services more accessible. Additionally, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Veterans and other external stakeholders who have taken the time to share their experiences and thoughts on accessibility with us. This includes those who participated in the Let's Talk Veterans (LTV) consultation on Accessibility in Fall 2021. We asked about barriers that could be prevented and removed at VAC and the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB), and received over 200 responses, identifying issues and suggesting ways we might improve accessibility. This feedback has been shared with the appropriate areas of VAC and/or VRAB, and it will be considered in our work moving forward, including in this Accessibility Action Plan.

I would also like to recognize our VAC employees with disabilities and emphasize how valuable your perspectives are. Thank you for the important contributions you make. Since 2020, VAC's Accessibility Network has been providing feedback and suggestions to help VAC on its journey to become more accessibility-confident and to strengthen the collaborative effort needed to create an accessible work environment. We look forward to working with and learning from the Accessibility Network in the years ahead.

To achieve our goal of becoming accessibility-confident, it is important that we change our mindsets, both individually and as an organization. This will only happen through awareness and education to develop accessibility-related knowledge, abilities, and empathy. I encourage

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<sup>4</sup> [Canadian Survey on Disability 2017](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Canadian Human Rights Commission Annual Report to Parliament 2021](#)

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all of us to learn how to make documents accessible; to take the necessary steps to plan accessible meetings and events; and, to take every opportunity to listen and learn from the lived experience of persons with disabilities and their allies. These are just a few examples of ways we can make improvements to accessibility at VAC and in our everyday lives.

I look forward to providing yearly updates that communicate our progress on the Accessibility Action Plan, and thank all of you who have started this important work to identify, remove, and prevent barriers. Through this collective effort, we are taking the necessary steps to help VAC continue to build its capacity as a learning organization; one that is committed to accessibility and inclusion today and into the future.

Sincerely,  
Paul Ledwell  
Deputy Minister

### **1.4 Message from the Accessibility Network**

As members of the Accessibility Network, we are excited for the launch of the 2022-2025 Accessibility Action Plan at VAC. We are proud to have been a part of the process as active members, and were consulted extensively on the barriers that exist and the actions proposed to resolve them. As persons with disabilities, we acknowledge the challenges that we face every day living in an able-bodied and neurotypical world. Through our involvement with the Accessibility Action Plan, we feel seen and heard in regards to the daily barriers we face and are hopeful for the future.

We are eager to see positive changes made to remove barriers that persons with disabilities face in order to improve the quality of the services we offer to Canadians, and the work environment of the employees. As we move forward together, we will stay up to date on progress of the Action Plan, provide feedback with our ongoing experiences of barriers and improvements, and advocate for equality and accessibility throughout VAC. Making change is the responsibility of everyone and we hope that you will be our allies as we move forward!

### **1.5 Accessibility statement**

VAC commits to continuous learning, and to taking steps now and sustaining them into the future to foster a respectful, equitable and accessible environment that removes accessibility barriers and supports inclusion for all.

## **2 Areas described under section 5 of the Act**

## 2.1 Employment

### Desired outcomes:

- Job seekers with disabilities see VAC as a workplace of choice.
- Job seekers and public servants with disabilities have access to employment opportunities at VAC and can contribute to their full potential.

### Tracking:

Progress toward these outcomes, including improved recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities, will be measured by referencing data sources such as, the Public Service Employee Survey, VAC's Employee Pulse Survey and VAC's Workforce Statistics.

#### 2.1.1 Employment barrier #1

- Persons with disabilities are under-represented in VAC's hiring, acting appointments, and promotions, and are over-represented in departures. This may be due to one or more of the following factors:
  - persons with disabilities having difficulties with, and higher drop-off rates in, selection processes (as compared to persons without disabilities)
  - lack of skill development opportunities for persons with disabilities, including language training, to support career growth and development
  - persons with disabilities not self-identifying
  - VAC not being perceived as an accessible and inclusive workplace

#### **Action for employment barrier #1**

- Develop VAC-specific tools for more accessible and inclusive hiring with the goal of closing the representation gaps for people with disabilities:
  - Plan a "just in time" unconscious bias tool that VAC's assessment board members and hiring managers can review prior to making staffing decisions.
  - Implement an "Attestation of Impartiality and Diversity Form", where selection board members can document that they belong to equity seeking communities.
  - Create a repository including the names of qualified equity-seeking community members who are interested in participating in assessment boards.
  - Develop an "Articulation of Selection Decision Form" highlighting key employment equity considerations in the selection of candidates.
  - Identify three Accommodation Assessment Ambassadors among staffing advisors to support hiring managers in offering timely and appropriate accommodation measures during staffing processes.

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- **Completed by:** June 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services (CFOCS) Branch

### Action for employment barrier #1

- Tailor initiatives to support recruitment and career development of persons with disabilities:
  - Create a fully qualified EX minus 1 pool tailored to recruit members of certain equity-seeking communities, including persons with disabilities.
  - Coordinate sessions with the VAC Managers Network to promote diverse and inclusive staffing practices, including the demystifying of common myths associated with the recruitment of persons with disabilities.
- **Completed by:** June 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

### Action for employment barrier #1

- Promote VAC as an inclusive workplace for employees with disabilities:
  - Launch a self-identification campaign.
  - Undertake a review of language used in recruitment communications to ensure it is welcoming, accessible, and inclusive.
  - Launch a learning series on “How to Apply on a Process” for all employees, including a session tailored to persons with disabilities.
  - Undertake a review of onboarding to ensure they include links to accessibility-related supports, and how to obtain them.
- **Completed by:** June 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

### 2.1.2 Employment barrier #2

- The process for employees to obtain accommodations or tools and resources needed at work is complex. This also impacts managers, who do not feel equipped to recruit, develop and support persons with disabilities.

### Action for employment barrier #2

- Finalize the business case including resource requirements, roles, processes, tools, and partnerships for a Disability Management Unit at VAC that will introduce an improved and centrally coordinated approach to employee disability management, duty to accommodate, long term disability, workers compensation and return to work, using a case management approach.

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- Create a Duty to Accommodate checklist for managers which includes links to resources, policies, practices and guidelines. Guidelines should include expected timeframes.
- Create FAQs to demystify the Duty to Accommodate process for employees and managers, offering tips on what is necessary for efficient approvals of DTA requests, and how/where to seek support to prepare for the conversations.
- Develop a learning plan and process to share and promote – and in some cases, make mandatory – tools and courses related to the Duty To Accommodate, such as: the Canada School of Public Service’s course on “Disability Management and Workplace Wellness” and the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport Conversation Guide. Activities will include an annual DTA accommodation information session in partnership with the VAC Managers’ Network, email reminders (timing linked with the performance cycle) and management team DTA training offered by Labour Relations.
- Create a process to ask employees about their accommodation and equipment needs.
- Implement the GC Workplace Accessibility Passport, and reduce accommodations related document requests to candidates when documents may not be required (or requirements can be minimized).
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

### 2.1.3 Employment barrier #3

- Managers may not consider operational requirements and related accessibility barriers when hiring persons with disabilities.

#### **Action for employment barrier #3**

- Create a process to ensure managers consider operational requirements and related accessibility barriers when hiring persons with disabilities, including through education and awareness. Provide hiring managers with a list of third-party software and indicate whether the software is accessible. Provide alternatives as available.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

## 2.2 The built environment

### Desired outcome:

- VAC’s built environments are barrier-free.

Tracking:

Progress toward this outcome will be measured by referencing data sources such as the Public Service Employee Survey, VAC's Employee Pulse Survey, and Visitor Satisfaction Surveys conducted at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, among others.

2.2.1 The built environment barrier #1

- Workspaces are not always set up with specialized in a timely manner.

**Action for the built environment barrier #1**

- Create, maintain and stock inventory of ergonomic equipment to facilitate distribution.
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch
- Persons with disabilities who visit and/or work in VAC offices (whether departmental employees, clients, or other members of the public) have identified physical and/or architectural barriers including situations of, for example, uncomfortable seating, poor ramps, inaccessible signage and inaccessible parking.

**Action for the built environment barrier #2**

Create a process to collect ongoing feedback from persons with disabilities (internal and external) on accessibility issues related to the built environment.

- **Completed by:** December 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, Service Delivery (SD) Branch, and Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)

2.2.2 The built environment barrier #3

- Safety equipment (e.g., plexiglass in area offices) installed to protect employees may have an aggravating effect on some persons with disabilities.

**Action for the built environment barrier #3**

- Engage third-party specialists to assess the impact of employee safety equipment on persons with disabilities and identify options for more accessible equipment.
  - **Completed by:** December 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

### 2.2.3 The built environment barrier #4

- VAC's emergency and business continuity procedures do not fully take into account accessibility (e.g., evacuation plans do not specifically address how to evacuate persons with disabilities).

#### Action for the built environment barrier #4

- Review and evaluate VAC's emergency and business continuity planning procedures to make them more accessible, while not compromising safety and complying with physical security directives.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, SD Branch

### 2.2.4 The built environment barrier #5

- There are known accessibility barriers at VAC's numerous commemorative sites in Canada and overseas. However, due to their historical value, modifications to these sites' structures and features must be carefully considered in order to balance protection and preservation concerns.

#### Action for the built environment barrier #5

- Engage appropriate expert(s) to assess accessibility requirements at VAC's commemorative sites, beginning with a comprehensive accessibility assessment by experts in cultural resource management.
  - **Completed by:** June 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** Commemoration and Public Affairs (CPA) Branch, CFOCS Branch, and experts (e.g., PSPC, contractor)

## 2.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

### Desired outcome:

- Veterans Affairs Canada's information and communications technology is usable by all, regardless of ability.

### Tracking:

Progress toward this outcome will be measured by referencing data sources such as the Government of Canada (GC) ICT Maturity Model and Scorecard and VAC's Application Management Directorate's Accessibility Progress Tool.

### 2.3.1 ICT barrier #1

- VAC's Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN), an integrated system that supports VAC employees in delivering departmental benefits and services, is not accessible. This legacy client data repository and processing system was built on older technology and cannot be brought to an accessible state.
- CSDN's current replacement is GCcase. Although it is more accessible than CSDN, GCcase is not fully accessible. GCcase is a version of Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management (CRM) hosted by PSPC. A newer version of Dynamics CRM promises to be more accessible.

#### Action for ICT barrier #1

- Develop a plan (e.g., the CSDN Modernization Plan) to further modernize systems (e.g., CSDN and GCcase), including to make them more accessible.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### Action for ICT barrier #1

- Implement a more accessible version of Microsoft Dynamics CRM at VAC, and migrate current systems to the new platforms.
  - **Completed by:** December 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

### 2.3.2 ICT barrier #2

- Some web-based applications are not fully accessible. For instance, My VAC Account is not fully compliant with the European Standard (EN 301 549). EN 301 549 is the European Union (EU) standard that pertains to digital accessibility that TBS is adopting for ICT. This standard mandates that all ICT in the public sector must be fully accessible. My VAC Account is a public-facing client portal that provides a simple and secure way to do business online with VAC. It currently has over 140,000 users.

#### Action for ICT barrier #2

- Bring My VAC Account into compliance with the European Standard (EN 301 549).
  - **Completed by:** December 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

**Action for ICT barrier #2**

- Bring actively-maintained web applications into compliance with the European Standard (EN 301 549), and apply the standard to any new features added to these applications.
  - **Completed by:** December 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, SD Branch

**Action for ICT barrier #2**

- Bring 25% of other web applications into compliance with the EN 301 549 standard. These applications are unlikely to have new features, and may be in scope for migration to Microsoft Dynamics CRM.
  - **Completed by:** December 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, SD Branch

**2.3.3 ICT barrier #3**

- Client-facing forms, letters, and scanned documents are not fully accessible. Client-facing forms and letters converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) in VAC's systems can have accessibility issues, especially with screen readers.

**Action for ICT barrier #3**

- Determine the nature and scope of accessibility barriers within forms, letters, and scanned documents (i.e., PDFs). Determine a method to bring each into compliance with the European Standard (EN 301 549).
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

**Action for ICT barrier #3**

- Perform accessibility assessments on forms as they are being created or updated and identify solutions.
  - **Completed by:** December 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

**Action for ICT barrier #3**

- Bring 25% of forms and letters into compliance with the European Standard (EN 301 549).
  - **Completed by:** December 2025

- **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.4 ICT barrier #4

- Data analytics dashboards and reports are not fully accessible.

#### Action for ICT barrier #4

- Identify and remove accessibility barriers in 50% of data analytics dashboards and reports.
  - **Completed by:** December 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.5 ICT barrier #5

- Not all public-facing mobile applications are fully accessible (e.g., Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Coach Canada and Veterans Matter mobile applications).

#### Action for ICT barrier #5

- Perform accessibility assessments and upgrade public-facing mobile applications.
  - **Completed by:** December 2025
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.6 ICT barrier #6

- Some of VAC's internal legacy desktop software (e.g., software provided by third-party vendors) is not fully accessible.

#### Action for ICT barrier #6

- Conduct accessibility audits to identify fixes on internal desktop software and take action as appropriate (upgrade or replace).
  - **Completed by:** December 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.7 ICT barrier #7

- Certain accessibility features of VAC's operating system and mobile devices are not enabled due to concerns around compatibility and security.

#### Action for ICT barrier #7

- Evaluate additional accessibility features of VAC's operations system and mobile devices that can be enabled.

- **Completed by:** December 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, Shared Services Canada (SSC)

#### 2.3.8 ICT barrier #8

- The current procurement process for new software and hardware does not include a standard accessibility evaluation.

##### **Action for ICT barrier #8**

- Develop a standard accessibility evaluation and incorporate this evaluation into the procurement process for new software and hardware.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, SSC

#### 2.3.9 ICT barrier #9

- There is currently no technical training provided regarding the accessibility features on VAC systems, applications, and devices.

##### **Action for ICT barrier #9**

- Create a plan to provide technical training regarding the accessibility features on VAC systems, applications, and devices. Build specific training into our planning.
  - **Completed by:** June 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.10 ICT barrier #10

- Accessibility enhancements (to VAC systems, applications, and devices) are not communicated or promoted.

##### **Action for ICT barrier #10**

- Create a plan to identify, communicate, and promote accessibility enhancements (to VAC systems, applications, and devices).
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.3.11 ICT barrier #11

- Providing in-home support for tasks such as equipment set-up has not been possible for numerous reasons (e.g., capacity, location, and health and safety risks).

**Action for ICT barrier #11**

- Identify options to provide in-home setup of IT equipment for persons with disabilities.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

2.3.12 ICT barrier #12

- VAC's Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Request Processing Software – AccessPro Case Management (APCM) is not fully accessible. In turn, response packages provided to requestors are not accessible.

**Action for ICT barrier #12**

- Purchase and implement new processing software that is accessible.
  - **Completed by:** June 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

2.3.13 ICT barrier #13

- ATIP Operations does not currently provide an accessible telephone line (e.g., hearing impaired and/or deaf accessibility options).

**Action for ICT barrier #13**

- VAC and SSC to implement an accessible telephone line (e.g., text telephone (TTY) functionality) for ATIP Operations to improve service for hearing-impaired or deaf clients.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch, SSC

2.4 Communication (other than information and communication technologies)

Desired outcomes:

- Veterans Affairs Canada staff are equipped to design and deliver communications that are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are satisfied with the accessibility of VAC's communications.

Tracking:

Progress toward these outcomes will be measured by referencing data sources such as:

- evaluations from VAC events

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- visitor satisfaction surveys
- feedback from persons with disabilities, such as members of VAC's Accessibility Network
- consultation with Veterans and other external stakeholders

### 2.4.1 Communication barrier #1

- In-person and virtual events are not always barrier-free.

#### **Action for communication barrier #1**

- Develop accessibility-related references and tools for VAC-led commemorative events in Canada and abroad.
- In all International Operations Directorate event and project plans, include a new section providing an analysis of accessibility observations, barriers and/or mitigations.
- Address accessibility as a broad planning concept in development of European Operations Quality Visitor Experience (QVE) Strategy. This strategy will guide all planning efforts for visitor experience programming at VAC sites moving forward. For instance, accessibility-related questions will be included in 2022 Visitor Satisfaction Surveys conducted at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial.
- Continue to assess and make improvements to parking lots, walkways, and curbs on VAC-managed memorial sites in Europe.
  - **Completed by:** December 2022
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CPA Branch

### 2.4.2 Communication barrier #2

- Described video is not available for silent videos at VAC's visitor centres at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial.
- Subtitles need to be added to audio visual displays at these visitor centres.

#### **Action for communication barrier #2**

- Add described video (audio) to silent videos in visitor centres.
- Add subtitles to audio visual displays in visitor centres.
  - **Completed by:** December 2024
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CPA Branch

## 2.5 The procurement of goods, services and facilities

### Desired outcome:

- All goods and services procured by Veterans Affairs Canada are accessible.

### Tracking:

Progress toward this outcome will be measured by referencing information sources such as feedback received from internal clients and persons with disabilities, such as members of VAC's Accessibility Network.

#### 2.5.1 The procurement of goods, services and facilities barrier #1

- Some VAC staff are not familiar with accessibility best practices/requirements for procurement and contracting.

#### Action for the procurement of goods, services and facilities barrier #1

- Incorporate accessibility-related considerations into procurement information sessions. These sessions will be offered to employees two times per year and will increase awareness of accessibility-related requirements in procurement and contracting.
- Establish ICT-specific standards that are required for all procurement for third-party built software.
- Establish accessibility standards for the procurement of equipment such as furniture and supplies.
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** CFOCS Branch

#### 2.6 The design and delivery of programs and services

### Desired outcomes:

- Veterans Affairs Canada staff are equipped to design and deliver programs and services that are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are satisfied with the accessibility of VAC's programs and services.

### Tracking:

Progress toward these outcomes will be measured through:

- data sources such as evaluations from VAC events
- Visitor Satisfaction Surveys conducted at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial
- feedback from persons with disabilities such as members of VAC's Accessibility Network

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- consultation with Veterans and other external stakeholders

In addition, VAC's Audit and Evaluation Division (AED) will consider accessibility barriers and opportunities for improvement within projects, and will highlight best practices, or if further improvements are required, where applicable.

### 2.6.1 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #1

- Accessibility is not fully considered during the reporting phase for each audit and evaluation.

#### **Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #1**

- Establish an accessibility requirements checklist to be reviewed and adhered to during the reporting phase for each audit and evaluation.
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** AED

### 2.6.2 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #2

- Direct client communication initiated by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA) is by telephone. This may cause a barrier to those who are hard of hearing, who communicate using sign language, or with those with verbal communication difficulties. Although MS Teams and My VAC Account are additional options for client communications, VAC does not use these tools to initiate client communication.
- Clients do not have IT support when using MS Teams.
- Not everyone has reliable access to a computer or the internet.

#### **Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #2**

- Continue to maintain paper options for clients who wish to initiate and communicate by way of printed mail or My VAC Account.
- Ensure that all standard client communiqués (fact sheets and letters) meet accessibility standards.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** BPA

### 2.6.3 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #3

- Applications steps are not clear, concise, or easy to understand.

**Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #3**

- Make the application steps clear, concise and easy to understand and provide better support material. This will be achieved through:
  - Consulting on how to improve the online application in My VAC Account; and
  - Reviewing applications and communications material to ensure they meet applicants' needs.
- **Completed by:** December 2023
- **Roles and responsibilities:** SD Branch with support from CPA Branch

2.6.4 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #4

- Plain language needs to be used consistently in letters regarding disability benefits.

**Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #4**

- Develop an approval process to ensure that plain language is used consistently in all letters regarding disability benefits.
  - **Completed by:** December 2023
  - **Roles and Responsibilities:** SD Branch

2.6.5 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #5

- VAC's policies, programs and initiatives need to consider barriers and accessibility needs for individuals who are part of more than one equity-seeking group. For example, this would include a person who has a disability and is also part the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and additional sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQI+) communities, and/or who is Indigenous or belongs to another equity-seeking group.

**Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #5**

- Development and promotion of a departmental GBA Plus policy and GBA Plus tools, training, and resources, as a complement to accessibility considerations.
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance (SPPP) Branch

2.6.6 The design and delivery of programs and services barrier #6

- Consultation and engagement on VAC policy and program design is conducted on short timelines or in a way that is not accessible. For instance, the process may not provide

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enough time to Veterans with disabilities or other persons with disabilities to provide thoughtful feedback to inform these initiatives.

### **Action for the design and delivery of programs and services barrier #6**

- Expand and update the Disability Lens guidance in VAC’s Policy Development Manual using feedback received through the Fall 2021 Let’s Talk Veterans consultation on accessibility.
  - **Completed by:** June 2023
  - **Roles and responsibilities:** SPPP Branch

## 2.7 Transportation

- Following a careful review of policies, practices, programs and services, no barriers were identified in this area.

## 2.8 Organizational culture

### Desired outcome:

- Veterans Affairs Canada staff understand what accessibility means and why it matters, and are equipped to make the Department a more accessible and inclusive workplace and service provider.

### Tracking:

Progress toward this outcome will be measured by referencing data sources such as the Public Service Employee Survey and VAC’s Employee Pulse Survey.

Beyond the items identified above, VAC acknowledges the importance of reducing stigma, harassment, and discrimination, and celebrating abilities, diversity, and inclusion to make the Department accessibility-confident. This includes adopting a “yes-by-default” approach to workplace accommodations, and encouraging staff to increase their accessibility awareness, empathy, knowledge, and abilities.

It also means committing to continuous accessibility-related learning and improvement. To this end, considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that accessibility is top of mind in everything we do, e.g.:

- the documents and content we create, both for internal and external audiences
- the images and words we choose
- the events we hold
- our interactions with one another

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At the time of this Plan's publication, initiatives taken to support a more accessible organizational culture include:

- Creation of "Accessibility Confidence at VAC: A Playbook"
- Development of an accessible PowerPoint template and the introduction of a requirement to use this template in presentations to VAC's governance tables
- Promotion of accessibility learning opportunities offered by organizations external to VAC (e.g., SSC's accessible documents workshops)
- Promotion of, and holding activities to celebrate, National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) (celebrated annually during the last week of May) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) (December 3)
- Launching and continually updating VAC's Accessibility@work intranet site
- Creating an Accessibility MS Teams channel for all VAC staff, as well as an MS Teams channel specifically for members of VAC's Accessibility Network
- Creating the Department's "Accessibility Adopters" initiative to recognize and celebrate employees taking steps to incorporate accessibility into their day-to-day work at VAC
- Launching a "Storytellers" initiative to hear the lived experience/stories of persons with disabilities and/or their allies at VAC
- Ongoing promotion of the opportunity to consult with VAC's Accessibility Network on initiatives underway within the Department

Moving forward, VAC will continue to support an accessibility culture shift. We will continue to:

- find opportunities to collaborate with the Accessibility Network on accessibility-related initiatives
- develop accessible templates
- arrange speaking opportunities, panels, and presentations about accessibility
- promote "Accessibility Confidence at VAC: A Playbook"
- learn about and plan accessible meetings and events
- facilitate informal meeting opportunities related to accessibility (e.g., lunch and learns)
- celebrate accessibility-related events to increase education and awareness
- promote outreach to the Department's Ministerial Events team for advice on planning inclusive and accessible events

### 3 Training

There are a number of accessibility-related learning and training opportunities available to VAC employees.

Completion of learning activities/trainings might be further encouraged through:

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- inclusion of such activities in performance agreements
- making such activities and related resources part of VAC's (or part of division-specific) onboarding processes
- determining what accessibility-related learning activities or training may be made mandatory for employees of VAC, or within specific division(s)

Some of VAC's divisions have accessibility-related training or information sessions planned or underway as part of this Accessibility Action Plan, e.g.:

- VAC's Communications Division offers, and will continue to offer, training on VAC's Style Guide.
- In May 2021, VAC's Centralized Operations Division launched an e-learning module entitled Trauma-Informed Support Training. This course provides a basic overview of the principles of trauma-informed service, specifically in relation to those who have experienced military sexual trauma/sexual misconduct. The training is available to all employees who would like to participate.
- VAC's Procurement Unit will develop and offer two sessions/year to all VAC employees to increase awareness of accessibility-related requirements in procurement and contracting.

This Action Plan will also introduce mandatory training for managers on the duty to accommodate (i.e., through requiring completion of CSPA course INC120, "Disability Management and Workplace Wellness"), as well as through requiring all VAC staff to complete CSPA course INC115, "Addressing Disability Inclusion and Identifying Barriers to Accessibility."

Furthermore, there are ongoing learning and training opportunities that can help VAC staff on their journey to becoming more accessibility-confident (e.g., creating accessible content, hiring and accommodating persons with disabilities, planning inclusive events). VAC promotes these opportunities through its Accessibility@VAC intranet page, as well as through other media (e.g., emails to staff, MS Teams posts).

## 4 Consultations

Persons with disabilities were consulted in the preparation of this Accessibility Action Plan:

### 4.1 Consultations with VAC's Accessibility Network

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Through meetings of VAC's Accessibility Network, employees with disabilities have been consulted regarding the Department's way forward in accessibility, both in relation to VAC's Accessibility Action Plan, as well as other initiatives.

Through this important forum, unique learnings from the lived experience of persons with disabilities at VAC have been identified. For instance, Network members have noted that:

- Employees and managers alike often do not know how to navigate the duty to accommodate process. There are opportunities to improve the Department's business processes, to develop more subject matter expertise on disabilities and accommodations, and to consider the culture around accommodations.
- While training opportunities on accessible documents and plain language are available, there are opportunities for improvement in uptake and sustained implementation.
- There is still stigma for persons with disabilities that may deter some individuals from self-identifying.
- There may be more VAC can do to support and equip both employees and managers in regard to disability and accessibility.

These learnings from Network members have informed a number of items included in this Accessibility Action Plan, and will require a collective effort across the Department. The Network also reinforced the fact that an accessibility culture shift continues to be required at VAC. We want to create an environment where all employees can make their best contributions, and where all those who deal with the Department receive the most accessible experience possible.

VAC looks forward to continuing its work with the Accessibility Network in the identification of barriers and opportunities for improvement – all as part of its journey to becoming a more accessibility-confident organization.

### 4.2 Let's Talk Veterans Accessibility Consultation

VAC also engaged persons with disabilities in the preparation of this Plan through an external consultation. From 17 November – 14 December 2021, Veterans and other external stakeholders were invited to participate in a consultation on the Department's external engagement platform, Let's Talk Veterans. The consultation was promoted through My VAC Account, email, Salute! newsletter and social media to help us reach as many Veterans and stakeholders as possible. Please see the [final report](#).

Respondents were asked to describe and provide suggestions to remove/prevent any accessibility barriers they may face when interacting with the Department:

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- **Physical and/or architectural barriers** occur when buildings and facilities are not accessible or usable by all people.
- **Technological barriers** occur when technology, or the way it is used, does not meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
- **Information and communications barriers** happen when persons with disabilities cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is accessible to others.
- **Attitudinal barriers** prevent persons with disabilities from achieving full integration, acceptance, and participation in society, and can include things such as the words we use, and the way we present information. These barriers can be based on stereotypes or assumptions, or simply a lack of understanding.
- **Systemic barriers** are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

A total of 209 submissions were received during the consultation period. Of these, 174 were completed in English, and 35 were completed in French.

Some examples of feedback related to accessibility barriers at VAC and/or VRAB included situations of, for example:

- uncomfortable seating
- poor ramps
- inaccessible parking
- accessibility issues related to online forms
- issues experienced while logging onto VAC's website
- complex language
- difficulty finding and understanding information related to VAC's policies, procedures, and programs

Some feedback related to ways accessibility barriers might be prevented or removed at VAC and/or VRAB included:

- presenting online materials in larger and better contrasting typeface/font
- making closed captioning available where possible
- providing more street-level entry with adequate parking/stopping spaces nearby
- training opportunities on trauma-informed support
- making steps and instructions on VAC's website more clear
- adding voice-to-text feature where possible

It is to be noted that some feedback received goes beyond the scope of VAC's work to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers. However, all feedback was shared with the appropriate areas of VAC and/or VRAB for consideration, including to inform the development of VAC's 2022-2025 Accessibility Action Plan.

## 5 Budget and resource allocation

Action items identified for this Accessibility Action Plan are specific, clear and reasonable – items that can be completed over the Plan’s three-year timeframe.

Notably, for some barriers identified in this 2022-2025 Plan, action items of longer duration may be required in order to remove or prevent the barrier entirely. Accordingly, some actions included in this Plan may also carry forward into future Accessibility Action Plans.

As VAC continues on its journey to become barrier-free by 2040, the Department will ensure that actions to remove and prevent accessibility barriers are included as part of the Department’s financial planning cycle, whether within existing resource levels, or through longer-term strategies, such as budget proposals.

## 6 VAC’s recent actions taken to improve accessibility

- In efforts to train and collaborate with those who help Veterans and others in filling out applications, VAC is providing support to third-party groups who help those going through the application process.
- VAC uses a Veteran-centric approach in completing medical assessments. We offer Veterans the choice of environment where they are most comfortable, including through in-person visits (when the public health situation permits) and/or through the use of various virtual platforms such as video conferencing or telephone.
- VAC’s Commemoration Division has developed a Guide Training Package on interacting with people with various types of disabilities. This will enable student guides employed at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial to be more accessibility-confident.
- VAC recently launched MyInfo+: a more accessible version of the Department’s internal MyInfo application which allows employees to input and update their contact information.
- Work on the Daniel J. MacDonald Building at VAC Head Office, which is undergoing a major renovation, will build on the success of working arrangements established during COVID-19 while increasing the accessibility of the workplace.

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- The Department's Application Management Division has a dedicated team in place to assess VAC's applications for accessibility.
- The Department's Communications Division has established a point of contact (i.e., the ministerial events team) for fellow divisions to consult regarding how to plan accessible and inclusive meetings and events.
- In May 2021, VAC launched an e-learning module entitled "Trauma-Informed Support Training." This training is available to all employees and provides a basic overview of the principles of trauma-informed service, including in interactions with Veterans.
- VAC's updated Style Guide promotes accessibility by encouraging the use of plain language. This benefits employees and Veterans alike.
- The Department completed an Employment Systems Review, an in-depth analysis and review of VAC's employment practices, in consultation with employment equity group members, including employees with disabilities. The findings and recommendations from this review will be the foundation for the Department's updated internal Employment Equity and Diversity Action Plan (2022-2027).
- VAC is promoting tools to support the hiring and career development of persons with disabilities (e.g., [Employment Opportunity for Students with Disabilities](#), the [Mentorship Plus program](#), the [Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities](#), the [Federal Public Service Inclusive Appointment Lens](#), the Virtual Door to Talent with Disabilities).
- The Department launched the [Mentorship Plus program](#) at VAC to support EX feeder group members from equity-seeking communities, including persons with disabilities.
- The Human Resources Division issues guidance to hiring managers that encourages the use of sliding areas of selection to allow employment equity candidates from other Departments, including persons with disabilities, to apply on internal processes (e.g., open to all VAC employees and EE groups across all Departments).
- VAC actively participates in career fairs to increase recruitment of persons with disabilities: this includes researching and establishing a list of career fairs for VAC to attend (minimum two each year).
- VAC has included a mandatory statement on diversity and inclusion, including specific language on accessibility, in all advertised processes.

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- VAC continues to actively implement more Microsoft Office 365 accessibility features, including on the MS Teams platform, for all employees and those with disabilities.
- The Workplace Entry Scheduling Tool (WEST) application was built by VAC with PowerApps, and included accessibility considerations from the start.
- The Research Directorate conducts and collaborates on research and projects on Veteran well-being to increase VAC's knowledge of the characteristics and experiences of this population, including Veterans with disabilities.

## 7 Glossary

For more definitions, please refer to the [Glossary of the Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#) and the [Accessible Canada Act](#).

### 7.1 Definitions

**Accessibility** – The degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all (Source: [Glossary: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#)).

**Accessible by design** – This is a design process in which the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered. Accessibility sometimes refers to the characteristic that products, services, and facilities can be independently used by people with a variety of disabilities (Source: [Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology](#)).

**Accessibility-confident** – VAC staff understand what accessibility means and why it matters, and are equipped to make the Department a more accessible and inclusive service provider and employer.

**Accessibility Network** – The Network provides the opportunity for employees with a disability, as well as their allies, to help identify accessibility barriers within the Department, and to provide feedback on the plans under development for a more accessibility-confident VAC. This group provides feedback and input based on their lived experiences and help guide VAC towards being a more accessibility-confident Department.

**Accommodation** – This term refers to the design and adaptation of a work environment to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, and do what is required in the circumstances of each individual, to avoid discrimination up to the point of undue hardship.

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**Barrier** – A barrier includes anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation (Source: [Accessible Canada Act, S.C. 2019, c. 10](#)).

**Disability** – Any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society (Source: [Accessible Canada Act, S.C. 2019, c. 10](#)).

**Duty to accommodate (DTA)** – Employers have a duty to accommodate employees to avoid discrimination based on the eleven grounds identified [section 2 of the Canadian Human Rights Act \(CHRA\)](#). Employers must accommodate employees who fall into the groups protected by the CHRA up to the point of undue hardship (Source: VAC’s internal Employment Equity and Diversity Action Plan 2017-2022).

**Employment equity** - The [Employment Equity Act](#) sets out requirements for Canadian employers, private and public, to proactively increase the representation of four designated groups: women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities. (Source: VAC’s internal [Employment Equity and Diversity Action Plan 2017-2022](#)).

**Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** – An analytical tool used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender-diverse people may experience policies, programs, and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA Plus acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. GBA Plus also considers many other identity factors, like race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability. By incorporating GBA Plus throughout VAC’s policy, planning and operations, VAC will better understand how activities may impact Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP members, their families, and VAC employees.

**GC Workplace Accessibility Passport** – The Accessibility Passport is a tool that promotes collaboration between public service employees and managers. It will allow them to promptly identify and implement the devices, tools, and support measures that will enable employees to succeed in their job. The Passport is owned by the employee and will document adjustment needs, possible solutions, devices or supports received in the past, and adaptive tools that the employee would like to bring with them, should they change jobs or organizations.

**Plain language** – This refers to clear, straight-forward writing. It avoids obscure vocabulary and complex sentences. Writing in plain language does not mean over-simplifying or leaving out critical information. Using plain language makes critical information accessible and readable for everyone.

**Screen reader** - A screen reader is a software application that enables people with severe visual impairments to use a computer. (Source: [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#))

**Unconscious bias** - An implicit attitude, stereotype, motivation or assumption that can occur without one's knowledge, control or intention. Unconscious bias is a result of one's life experiences and affects all types of people. Everyone carries implicit or unconscious biases. Examples of unconscious bias include gender bias, cultural bias, race/ethnicity bias, age bias, language and institutional bias. Decisions made based on unconscious bias can compound over time to significantly impact the lives and opportunities of others who are affected by the decisions one makes. (Source: [Creating an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#)).

## Appendix A

### VAC terminology

For information on VAC's terminology, please refer to the [Organization](#) and [Resources](#) pages on the [Veterans Affairs Canada](#) website.

**Accessibility progress tool** – This tool, used by the Application Management Directorate, refers to automated and manual methods to track applications in scope; accessibility assessments completed on those; and EN 301 549 compliance status of each application as improvements are made over time.

**Audit and Evaluation Division** – This division has a dual role of providing both audits and evaluations for the Department. Audit provides independent and objective assurance as well as advisory services designed to improve operations within the Department. Evaluation judges the merit, worth or value of programs or services, based on the neutral collection and analysis of evidence. Evaluation informs decision making, improvements, innovation and accountability.

**Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial** – Located in northern France, this memorial stands as an important symbol of remembrance and a lasting tribute to all Newfoundlanders who served during the First World War. A great bronze caribou – the emblem of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment – forms the heart of the memorial.

**Bureau of Pensions Advocates** (BPA) – BPA provides free advice, assistance and representation for individuals dissatisfied with decisions rendered by VAC with respect to their claims for entitlement to disability benefits, or any assessment awarded for their claimed conditions. The Bureau's advocates are dedicated exclusively to assisting clients in the redress process.

[Canadian National Vimy Memorial](#) – This memorial honours all Canadians who served during the First World War. It bears the names of those who died in France with no known grave and is located at the site of Canada’s victory during the Battle of Vimy Ridge in northern France.

[Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Services](#) (CFOCS) – This branch is responsible for supporting VAC to meet Government of Canada requirements in areas such as financial stewardship, corporate reporting and key accountabilities. The branch also provides internal corporate services including human resources, finance, information technology, information management, security and administration, procurement and contracting, integrated planning, and access to information and privacy activities.

**Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN)** – This is an aging integrated system that supports VAC employees in delivering Departmental benefits and services.

**Commemoration and Public Affairs** – This branch is responsible for commemorating the achievements and sacrifices of those who served and continue to serve Canada in times of war, military conflict and peace. It also engages meaningfully with stakeholders and provides accessible, timely, accurate, clear, and objective communications services and products to Veterans, their families, VAC employees and Canadians in both official languages.

[Commemorative Partnership Program](#) (CPP) – This program funds organizations who undertake remembrance initiatives that honour those who served Canada and keep the memory of their achievements and sacrifices alive for all Canadians.

**Corporate Secretariat** – This division supports the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Office of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and Departmental senior management by coordinating Ministerial briefings, monitoring and supporting the Departmental governance committees, Parliamentary and Cabinet activities, as well as managing Ministerial correspondence and the Client Relations Unit.

**European Operations** – This division acts as a leader, steward and catalyst for remembrance overseas. The Division’s mandate is to represent Veterans Affairs Canada in Europe on all matters that affect the commemoration of Canada’s war dead and the contribution of Canadian Forces in times of peace and war.

**European Standard (EN 301 549)** – EN 301 549 is the European Standard for Digital Accessibility that the Government of Canada is adopting for ICT. The industry standard for web accessibility is W3C WCAG ([World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)). EN 301 549 includes WCAG plus accessibility standards for all other digital products, including mobile phones, electronic documents, software, and hardware.

**Funeral and Burial Program** – This is a program administered by the Last Post Fund on behalf of VAC that provides funeral, burial and grave marking benefits to eligible Canadian and Allied Veterans.

**GCcase** – This is an integrated system that supports VAC employees in delivering Departmental benefits and services.

**Last Post Fund** (LPF) – LPF is a non-profit organization that works to ensure that no Veteran is denied a dignified funeral and burial, as well as a military gravestone, due to insufficient funds at the time of death.

**Let's Talk Veterans** (LTV) – LTV is an online accessible consultation and engagement platform launched in 2021 to give Canadians, Veterans and their families the opportunity to provide direct feedback to VAC.

**My VAC Account** – This tool is a public-facing client portal that enables Veterans to apply for benefits, send secure messages, and track applications online with VAC.

**Office of the Veterans' Ombud** (OVO)– This Office ensures that Veterans and their families are treated fairly and have access to the programs and services that contribute to their wellbeing. They also study and recommend ways to make these programs better.

**Service Delivery (SD)**– This branch is responsible for delivering benefits and services and for providing social and economic support that respond to the needs of Veterans, our other clients and their families.

**Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance** – This branch is responsible for ensuring that VAC programs and policies remain relevant and meet the current and future needs of our clients. This branch also developing strategic partnerships in support of program and policy development.

**Veterans Review and Appeal Board** (VRAB) – The Board provides an independent avenue of review and appeal for disability decisions made by VAC. If a client decides to appeal a disability benefits decision from VAC, they can choose to have a BPA lawyer present their case.

**Veteran-centric** – Veterans are at the centre of everything we do: our philosophies, our ideas, our operations. To be Veteran-centric means we are proactive, responsive and compassionate to the needs of Veterans and their families, and ensuring they have all the benefits and services for which they are eligible. We will continue to streamline our processes to make them easier to follow.

## Appendix B

### Other government departments and services

For more information, please refer to the Government of Canada list of [departments and agencies](#).

**Government of Canada ICT Maturity Model and Scorecard** – The Government of Canada (GC) Accessible ICT Maturity Model and Scorecard identifies eight dimensions that are considered necessary to [making ICT accessible to all](#). There are five maturity levels for each dimension. Level 1 is the initial level and level 5 is the optimizing level. There are key building blocks for each of these maturity levels.

**[Public Services and Procurement Canada \(PSPC\)](#)** – This department plays an important role in the daily operations of the Government of Canada as a key provider of services for federal departments and agencies. PSPC supports them in the achievement of their mandated objectives as central purchasing agent, linguistic authority, real property manager, treasurer, accountant, integrity adviser, and pay and pension administrator.

**[Shared Services Canada \(SSC\)](#)** – This department was created in 2011 to transform how the government manages and secures its information technology (IT) infrastructure. They deliver digital services to Government of Canada organizations, providing modern, secure, and reliable IT services so federal organizations can deliver digital programs and services that meet Canadians' needs.

**[Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology program \(AAACT\)](#)** – AACT is a Shared Services Canada program that provides services and solutions to help the public service serve all Canadians, including those with disabilities. AACT provides expertise in accessible digital content ensuring GC products and services are available to everyone. They offer training, tools, and testing services to help departments create accessible digital content (e.g., documents, presentations, and web content) that is inclusive by design.

**[Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat \(TBS\)](#)** – This secretariat is the administrative branch of the committee of ministers responsible for the financial management of the federal government (Treasury Board). It is a central agency of the Government of Canada. The role of the Secretariat is to support the Treasury Board and to provide advice to Treasury Board members in the management and administration of the Government.

## 2023 UPDATES

[Women and Gender Equality Canada \(WAGE\)](#) – WAGE is the lead federal department responsible for advancing gender equality, including with respect to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada’s economic, social, and political life.