



# 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan

Business Development Bank of  
Canada

December 16, 2022



# Easy Read Version

This easy-read summary is a simple and shorter plan. For the full plan, skip to the section called: [BDC's Accessibility Plan](#).

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is a federal Crown corporation. This means that while we are overseen by the government, we operate as an independent entity.

BDC supports entrepreneurs across Canada. An entrepreneur is someone who starts their own business. We support Canadian small and medium businesses. We support them by lending money and providing them advice. We also give them information and tools on our website. We support the needs of all Canadian entrepreneurs. This includes entrepreneurs with disabilities. We are committed to being more accessible for people with disabilities.

This Accessibility Plan outlines the actions we will take over the next 3 years to be more accessible:

- Consult people with disabilities to help us decide what to do. Add questions about accessibility to surveys.
- Train all employees on disability and accessibility. We will also develop resources and training about hidden and visible disabilities.
- Ask clients to tell us if they have a disability. Use this information to make sure we are supporting entrepreneurs with disabilities. Clearly communicate on our website how people can access accommodations.
- Make changes to how we pick offices to rent to better include accessibility. And work with our landlords and property managers to make plans to add visual alarms.
- Make changes to our offices such as checking whether we have enough quiet workspaces. We will also make sure that employees who use wheelchairs can access storage cabinets.
- Do more to encourage people with disabilities to apply for jobs at BDC ensuring job postings are inclusive.
- Develop a strategy on how to help managers better support employees with disabilities. This will include accommodations training.



- Update the website to remove accessibility barriers that are considered easy to fix, such as colour contrast and unlabelled links. We will review the accessibility of our other websites and applications.
- We will make a process to give documents in alternate formats.
- Create brand and communication standards to incorporate accessibility considerations.
- Create a social media standard to make sure that all posts are accessible.
- Ensure that accessibility is considered when we buy things. We want to make sure that the things we buy are not making new barriers to accessibility.

Your feedback is important to our ongoing efforts. If you have feedback about this plan and/or about accessibility at BDC, you can share it by contacting:

- BDC Human Resources – DEI
- E-mail address: [accessiblebdc@bdc.ca](mailto:accessiblebdc@bdc.ca)
- Telephone number: 1-877-232-2269 ext 5
- Mailing address : Rez de chaussée, 5 Place Ville Marie, Montréal, QC H3B 5E7
- Social Media Channels - [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).



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# BDC's Accessibility Action Plan

## General

### 1.1 Description of BDC

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Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is a federal Crown corporation. That means that while we are overseen by the Government of Canada, we run independently to help entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is someone who starts their own business. We support entrepreneurs across Canada to expand their business by providing loans, advice, and resources. We complement the role played by traditional banks. We are able to offer loans that other lenders cannot because we take on more risk.

### 1.2 Statement of Commitment

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BDC is dedicated to being accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. This includes being as accessible as possible to our employees, clients, and partners. We recognize that people with disabilities are the experts in their own experience and accessibility. Many of our initiatives focus on consulting with people with disabilities and learning from their lived experiences. We also recognize that accessibility is an ongoing process. This plan will evolve, and we will continue to make improvements over time. Moving forward, we will address barriers as soon as we become aware of them even if they are not identified in our Accessibility Plan. This plan is part of our commitment to always do better for people with disabilities.

### 1.3 Contact Information & Feedback Process

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BDC welcomes feedback, including anonymous feedback, about this Accessibility Plan. We also welcome any feedback you might have about the accessibility of BDC. We are committed to reviewing (and responding to) the feedback that we receive and taking steps to address barriers identified through this feedback.



You can submit feedback about accessibility at BDC or this plan by contacting:

- BDC Human Resources - DEI
- E-mail address: [accessiblebdc@bdc.ca](mailto:accessiblebdc@bdc.ca).
- Telephone number: 1-877-232-2269 Ext 5
- Mailing address: Rez de chaussée, 5 Place Ville Marie, Montréal, QC H3B 5E7

We will also accept feedback about our accessibility through our social media accounts, which include the following [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

## 1.4 Alternative Formats

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You can request alternative formats of this Accessibility Plan by contacting: [accessiblebdc@bdc.ca](mailto:accessiblebdc@bdc.ca)

An electronic format of this Accessibility Plan can be downloaded immediately from the BDC's website.

BDC will provide alternative formats as soon as possible. We commit to providing them within these timelines:

- Print: 15 days
- Large print (larger text): 15 days
- Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or with low vision can read with their fingers): 45 days
- Audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud): 45 days

## 1.5 Definitions

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This plan uses the following definitions:

**Disability:** An impairment, or difference in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or communication ability. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or can change over time.

**Barrier:** Anything that might prevent people with disabilities from full and equal participation in society. Barriers can be based on attitudes, the built environment, technology, in how information is communicated or can be the result of a policy or procedure.



**Accessibility:** The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people, including people with a variety of disabilities, to access and use them, as independently as they person wishes.

# Areas Described under Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA)

## 2.1 Organization-Wide Initiatives

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BDC is committed to engaging with people with disabilities on an ongoing basis. This will make sure that all accessibility improvements that we make reflect the real experience and priorities of people with disabilities. As the disability movement says: Nothing about us without us.

BDC is also committed to training on accessibility. Training will help to make sure that employees understand what accessibility means and why it is important. It will also help them to understand how to make their work more accessible. Training our employees in this way will help us improve accessibility in all aspects of our operations.

To improve accessibility, BDC has established an Accessibility Working Committee to address organization-wide issues related to accessibility. BDC also created an Executive Steering Committee, which comprises senior leaders across the organization to ensure accessibility work is moving forward. We also have a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisor. This person serves as Accessibility Support. This will help us continue to address accessibility issues across BDC and plan for the Accessible Canada Act (ACA). The ACA is a recent law that aims to reduce disability-related barriers across Canada by January 1, 2040. This role will provide organization-wide accessibility planning, communication, consultation, and progress reporting.

Our organization-wide accessibility initiatives are:

- Consulting with people with disabilities on an ongoing basis. This will include focus groups, surveys and listening circles of employees and clients.
- BDC will include questions or statement on accessibility in surveys and questionnaires.



- BDC will roll out organization-wide training on disability and accessibility awareness for all employees.

## 2.2 Built Environment

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BDC has over 100 offices across Canada. In some cities, these are large downtown offices and in others we have smaller offices. We sometimes share spaces with other organizations. Our goal is to make our offices as accessible as possible for all employees and clients.

We have taken steps to address the needs of employees when planning our office spaces and continue to make ongoing improvements based on feedback. These changes have included adding adjustable desks, different types of seating, automatic doors, and braille signage. However, we have identified additional barriers, such as our open office spaces which may not suit the working styles of some employees. We will also make improvements to how we consider accessibility when leasing new space.

Our built environment goals are:

- Revise our emergency evacuation plan. Changes are needed because fewer people are working in the office. We will update our Emergency Evacuation Plan to include alternatives to fire wardens.
- Evaluate whether we have enough quiet workspaces to meet the needs of employees.
- Make sure that future storage, including kitchen cabinets, copy rooms and personal lockers, are fully accessible for employees who use wheelchairs. We will do this by including accessibility into our standards moving forward.
- Work with our landlords and property managers to explore the possibility and identify scheduling to implement visual alternatives to auditory alarms.
- Review and improve how we pick offices to rent to better include accessibility requirements.





## 2.3 Employment

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BDC has about 2,800 employees across Canada. We offer a flexible work environment in which employees can work in our offices or remotely. We are also committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in our hiring practices and talent strategy and are making improvements.

We also recognize that barriers exist for employees and applicants with disabilities. There are also added challenges for employees who have hidden disabilities. In part, these challenges may stem from a reluctance to share about hidden disabilities and a gap in knowledge among senior management on accessibility and disability. More training is needed, especially for managers who hire and manage other employees.

Our employment goals are:

- Review the language in our policies to ensure that the most up-to-date language is being used.
- Make sure that everyone involved in the accommodation process gets training about the reasons for accommodation and the legal duty to accommodate employees.
- Provide additional disability training to all managers that have staffing responsibilities. This training is in addition to the organization-wide training on disability and accessibility awareness for all existing employees.
- Review all new job postings for inclusive language, disability inclusivity and essential job requirements.
- Add a statement to our careers page encouraging people with disabilities to apply.
- Develop resources, workshops, and/ or training sessions about hidden disabilities.
- Develop a strategy on how to best equip managers to support employees with disabilities.
- Centralize the funding for accommodation requests.

## 2.4 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

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BDC uses a variety of digital tools and technologies, including our public website (<https://www.bdc.ca/en>), social media platforms, videos, and digital resources for entrepreneurs. We have tried to make our technologies accessible to everyone, but we recognize that improvements can



be made. During our consultations with people with disabilities, we identified barriers on our website. These barriers included issues with colour contrast, too many links, and unlabelled buttons and links.

Our ICT goals are:

- Make changes to the website to address barriers identified as easy to update, including colour contrast and focus borders for buttons.
- Confirm that the accessibility features of Microsoft Office 365 are enabled for all employees.
- Review the accessibility of our other websites and applications, including Client Space and our intranet.

## 2.5 Communications, other than ICT

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BDC develops and distributes information and resources to help entrepreneurs. Members of the public can reach out to us by phone, email, mail, or through the website. While we aim to make sure that our communication channels are accessible, we recognize that there are barriers to how we communicate. This includes inaccessible public documents and information that is not in plain language.

Our communications goals are:

- Update our current code of conduct for communications to ensure it includes mention of people with disabilities and accessibility.
- Create and adopt a social media standard to ensure that all posts are accessible and consistent with the use of alternative text.
- Update the brand and communication standards, including videos productions to incorporate accessibility considerations.
- Create and implement a process for requesting and receiving documents and materials in alternate formats.
- Establish a plan to make hybrid meetings more accessible. This might include assistive listening devices, live captioning, designating a facilitator, etc. to reduce barriers from unclear audio IT/ events.



## 2.6 Procurement

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BDC often buys technology and goods that support our operations and services. The process of buying is called “procurement”. Accessibility is sometimes considered when we procure external goods and products. However, it is usually not mentioned or not specific enough in our procurement. We will be changing the way we ask for goods and services to improve the accessibility of the products and services we use.

Our procurement goals are:

- Establish a Source List for required accessibility services (e.g., Braille, large print digital audio, captioning, descriptive video, and sign language interpretation).
- Contracting officers will receive training on how to support employees to incorporate accessibility into procurement.
- Make sure that accessibility considerations are added to procurement documents. This includes directives, policies, checklists, requirement templates, and template contracts.

## 2.7 Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

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BDC works to support entrepreneurs across Canada. We do this by providing services such as business loans and business advice. We also offer more specialized loans, investment solutions and venture capital to help entrepreneurs grow their businesses. Our business advice focuses on various areas of running a business. This includes leadership and management, sales and marketing, and business strategy. We also provide resources and tools on our websites, such as our Entrepreneur’s Toolkit and Business Loan Calculator.

We have strived to make our programs and services as accessible as possible for all Canadians. We have an internal working group to address issues related to accessibility and disability. However, we recognize that barriers still exist to accessing our programs and services, including a lack of a formal plan for supporting clients in accessing BDC services.

Our accessibility goals for programs and services are:

- Start collecting data about clients identifying as having a disability.
- Once BDC has implemented the data collection process, it will utilize the data to consider programming that is tailored to support entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Communicate on our website that accommodations are available for clients with disabilities and how accommodations can be accessed.



## 2.8 Transportation

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BDC does not currently run any transportation services; therefore, this priority area is not relevant to BDC.



# Consultations

BDC recognizes that people with disabilities are the primary experts on their own experiences with accessibility. BDC is committed to listening to people with disabilities. Before developing this Plan, BDC consulted with people with disabilities, and we will continue to consult people with disabilities as we enter new projects.

For this plan, we consulted people with disabilities in the following ways:

- An anonymous survey for employees with disabilities
- Interviews with BDC clients and entrepreneurs with disabilities
- A meeting with an accessibility focus group

BDC consulted with employees who have disabilities through an anonymous survey. The survey asked whether employees experienced any barriers while working at or interacting with BDC. We also asked employees who answered the survey to give details about the barriers they encountered. Finally, we asked for suggestions for improving accessibility at BDC. Through the survey, employees identified accessibility barriers such as difficulties with the process to receive workplace accommodations.

To get additional feedback from people with disabilities, we held a focus group for people with disabilities. This included people with physical disabilities, vision disabilities, hearing disabilities, mental health disabilities, cognitive disabilities, chronic health conditions and those who are neurodiverse. The purpose of the focus group was to provide some feedback on our public-facing activities. The group looked at our website, social media channels, videos, and digital resources. They also tried the live chat feature on our website. The most common feedback identified by the focus group relates to the accessibility of the videos that BDC has produced and distributed, as well as the language used in several of our job postings.

To get feedback directly from BDC clients who have disabilities, we conducted interviews with clients as well. Through these interviews, our clients identified more barriers, such as issues with the BDC website, and documents being in inaccessible PDF format. All barriers that were identified during these consultations have been reflected in the goals of this Accessibility Plan.



# Conclusion

Through this Accessibility Plan, BDC is dedicated to improving accessibility, addressing current and future barriers to accessibility, and making our operations accessible to everyone. We will also continuously revisit this Plan to ensure that accessibility is being addressed moving forward. BDC exists to support the needs of all entrepreneurs across Canada. This means making sure that all Canadian entrepreneurs, including people with disabilities, can access our programs and services free of any barriers. We also acknowledge that accessibility is not an outcome but rather a process. In other words, we will continuously work to address the needs of our employees and stakeholders with disabilities. As per ACA requirements, we will update this plan every 3 years and report on our progress moving forward. We will continue to improve accessibility moving forward.

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