

# Accessibility Plan

## 2024 to 2026

**WorkplaceNL**

Health | Safety | Compensation

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This Accessibility Plan is available on our website and also available in alternate formats upon request by emailing [info@workplacnl.ca](mailto:info@workplacnl.ca) or calling 1.800.563.9000.

If you have a question or comment about the plan,  
please email [info@workplacnl.ca](mailto:info@workplacnl.ca) or write to:

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## Welcome Message / Introduction

I am pleased to present WorkplaceNL's 2024 to 2026 Accessibility Plan. This plan meets the requirements under the provincial Accessibility Act and will help ensure equitable access to WorkplaceNL's programs and services. It demonstrates our commitment to ensuring existing and new programs, services, technologies and policies are developed with accessibility and inclusion in mind.

WorkplaceNL provides no-fault workplace injury insurance to employers and workers across Newfoundland and Labrador through administration of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022. We also work with employers and workers to promote safe and healthy workplaces, prevent workplace injuries, support injured workers and their families, and establish strong return-to-work programs.

We will build on past progress to promote accessibility awareness and find ways to become barrier-free. We will engage community experts, stakeholders and employees to better understand accessibility and remove barriers. We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our partners for sharing their expertise and support as we work together for greater accessibility and inclusiveness.

I invite you to read our plan to learn more and welcome your feedback on this plan and our annual progress reports as we work with our community partners to establish a barrier-free WorkplaceNL.

Ann Martin  
Chief Executive Officer, WorkplaceNL

## Glossary of Terms

**Accessibility Plan** – A plan developed to address the prevention, identification and removal of barriers in the policies, programs, practices and services of a public body.

**Disability** – Includes a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary or episodic in nature that, in interaction with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society.

**Barrier** – Anything that prevents a person from fully participating in society. Includes physical, architectural, information, communications, attitudinal and technological barriers, or a barrier established or perpetuated by an Act, regulations, policy or practice.

**Service Without Barriers** – An approach WorkplaceNL adopted to ensure we engage with representatives of people with disabilities and lived experience as we make service improvements, to ensure full and direct participation of members of the affected group. We work with community partners to better understand clients' needs and implement practical solutions to provide appropriate client service based on their particular challenge.

## Advancements to Date

Advancing accessibility and service delivery has been a long-term priority for WorkplaceNL.

In 2012, we established a Client Service Framework as part of our strategy and ongoing commitment to service excellence.

The framework looks at multiple facets of WorkplaceNL's operations to ensure an integrated, “we are one” organization-wide approach to continuously improve service.

The framework defines a Service Without Barriers approach to prevent, identify and remove barriers to accessing our services. Our action plans and deliverables evolve as we receive feedback from clients, engage with front-line employees and collaborate with community experts representing persons who experience challenges in accessing programs and services.

WorkplaceNL also created a centralized client services department in 2015. Renamed to Business and Innovation Services, the purpose of this area is to:

- Lead, support, measure, assure and manage client service improvements.
- Ensure a coordinated, consistent approach to service delivery across all programs and services.
- Develop and implement actions to improve accessibility.

Our cross-departmental Client Service Working Group champions service excellence and leads efforts to identify and remove service barriers, including work with community partnerships.

We have defined and publicly communicated our client service and accessibility standards to demonstrate our commitment to improve service delivery, accessibility and continuous innovation (see page 6).

## Work with Community Partners

WorkplaceNL engages those most impacted by our programs and services – our clients, stakeholders and community partners – and those responsible for delivering our services – our staff. Their expert knowledge and support have shaped our accessibility improvements (see Appendix A: Past Community Partnership Work).

We have made significant progress in collaboration with our partners – and there is more to learn and do. This Accessibility Plan for 2024 to 2026 builds on past achievements to make our services more accessible and remove barriers that our employees, clients, stakeholders and the public may experience.

## Statement of Commitment

WorkplaceNL defines client service as how we deliver our services – that we are courteous, timely, honest, accessible and respectful.

### Our Client Service Commitment

To provide the highest standard of fair, caring and quality service that meets, and often exceeds, our clients' expectations.

### Our Client Service Principles and Standards

In meeting our client service commitment, we are guided by five principles:

1. We treat all clients with dignity and respect.
2. We treat all clients in a courteous, fair and non-judgmental manner.
3. We give all clients an informed response, within a reasonable time.
4. We ensure that all clients have access to appropriate programs and services.
5. We strive to ensure a healthy and safe environment for staff and visitors to WorkplaceNL's offices and have zero tolerance for threats of any nature.

### Our Accessibility Statement

Our services are accessible and inclusive. Through community partnerships and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, we work to better understand our clients', stakeholders' and employees' needs to help prevent, identify and remove barriers that prevent full access to our services.

## Focus Areas and Goals

Our four long-term focus areas align with our mandate to help ensure that our programs, services and policies are accessible, and that we consult with community partners and those with lived experience as we develop or change.

1. Education and awareness
2. Continuous innovation
3. Accessibility of information and communication technology
4. Design of programs and service delivery

Within these focus areas, we have specific goals and annual actions to ensure we continually work to identify, remove and prevent barriers and address issues related to equitable access. The goals and actions also help ensure we pay attention to aspects of our operations that continue to evolve as we modernize and innovate.

### Focus Area One: Education and Communication

Focusing on educating and raising awareness of accessibility among our workforce is the foundation of our Accessibility Plan. We will continue to provide learning opportunities for our employees by engaging community groups representing persons with lived experiences and those who experience challenges participating in society.

The purpose of the Education and Communication focus area is to ensure we:

- Raise accessibility awareness to help create an accessibility-first mindset.
- Provide accessible and inclusive learning opportunities.

#### Goals

Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:

- Promote accessibility awareness across WorkplaceNL by providing training and raising awareness to foster an accessibility-first mindset.
- Continue to partner with community groups representing persons who experience service barriers to identify education opportunities to better understand accessibility issues and how to remove barriers.
- Help ensure employees are equipped to deliver accessible services.

## Focus Area Two: Continuous Innovation

The purpose of the Continuous Innovation focus area is to ensure WorkplaceNL is proactive and stays current with best practices and standards for accessibility by engaging those representing persons with lived experiences. WorkplaceNL will:

- Continuously work with community partners, stakeholders and employees to identify and remove barriers.
- Ensure innovative approaches to support accessibility.

### Goals

Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:

- Continue to partner with community groups and stakeholders to ensure a Service Without Barriers approach to improve accessibility.
- Ensure accessibility assessments for any site improvements.
- Share knowledge and best practices to reduce barriers across WorkplaceNL.

## Focus Area Three: Accessibility of Information and Communication Technology

The purpose of the Accessibility of Information and Communication Technology focus area is to ensure WorkplaceNL has accessible digital content and technology for our internal and external systems. As we modernize our operations, we will work to:

- Ensure new technologies or systems are accessible for clients and employees.
- Ensure clients have options to access services, including online, in-person, paper and via telephone.
- Assess technologies and identify areas for short and long-term improvement.

### Goals

Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:

- Provide accessibility support (guidance and advice) as new technological solutions are developed or procured to ensure accessibility standards are considered.
- Strengthen the governance process for technology projects by developing internal processes to help ensure accessible information and communications technology.
- Ensure our publications are available in alternate formats.
- Ensure digital content is accessible by default.



- Ensure barrier-free communications for employees.

## Focus Area Four: Design of Programs and Service Delivery

The purpose of the Design of Programs and Service Delivery focus area is to ensure WorkplaceNL delivers programs and services that are accessible to all by working with people with lived experience. WorkplaceNL will work to:

- Consult with community partners and persons with lived experience to design programs and services that are both accessible to and consider their needs.

### Goals

Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:

- Define principles for “accessible-by-design” to guide new or changes to programs, services and policies.
- Begin building capacity to develop, design, deliver and evaluate accessible and inclusive policy, programs and services.
- Continue integrating accessibility features into existing programs and services.

## Annual Actions

To ensure the continued progress of this accessibility plan, WorkplaceNL has established a governance structure, annual actions, a process to determine success and mechanisms for gathering feedback.

### Governance Structure

**Executive Sponsor and Champion:** Chief Financial and Information Officer (responsible for Business and Innovation Services)

- The Executive Sponsor is the senior management representative and champions the accessibility plan.

**Accessibility Lead:** Director, Business and Innovation Services (area responsible for organization-wide client service programs).

- The Accessibility Lead supports the work of the Accessibility Plan, including developing and implementing the plan, as well as regularly reporting progress. The lead will also chair the working group.

### **Client Service Working Group:**

- Membership: One representative each from our client-facing areas including - Service Centre, Assessments, Claims Services, Extended Services, Health Care Services and Prevention Services. The group will be expanded to include a representative each from our Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Communications, Procurement, Information Technology, Policy and Internal Review as well as Human Resource areas.
- The committee's mandate is to promote a culture that supports inclusion and a vision to proactively eliminate and prevent barriers to accessing service. This committee leads the development and implementation of the action plan, helps set annual priorities and works with community partners as required.

## **Annual Actions**

### **Year 1 – 2024**

- Expand internal participation in the Client Service Working Group.
- Refine the governance structure for the accessibility work.
- Promote accessibility awareness across WorkplaceNL by providing training to foster an accessibility-first mindset and help our employees understand accessibility and its importance.
- Develop a glossary of terms to streamline terminology, promote understanding and prevent miscommunication.
- Identify and establish year 1 community partnership(s).
- Complete accessibility reviews based on existing templates and in collaboration with community partners to identify recommendations.
- Work to identify best practices and standards for accessibility in modern technologies.
- Begin work to identify accessibility standards or improvements to incorporate into contracting processes.
- Identify a process to expand feedback, annual actions and evaluation of progress.
- Identify year 2 community partnership opportunities.
- Confirm year 2 work through our annual planning and budgeting cycle, considering recommendations stemming from accessibility reviews completed in 2024. Update the 2025 action plan accordingly.
- Implement any new accessibility standards or related recommendations in the timelines required, as identified in 2024 by the Provincial Government's Accessibility Standards Advisory Board.

## **Year 2 - 2025**

- Continue education and accessibility awareness training.
- Establish year 2 community partnerships.
- Identify year 3 community partnership opportunities.
- Implement any new accessibility standards or related recommendations in the timelines required, as identified by the Provincial Government's Accessibility Standards Advisory Board.
- Confirm year 3 work through the annual planning and budgeting cycle, considering recommendations stemming from accessibility reviews completed in 2024 and 2025. Update the 2026 action plan accordingly.
- Identify ongoing learning approaches to increase knowledge and understanding of accessibility as well as support inclusion.

## **Year 3 – 2026**

- Continue education and accessibility awareness training.
- Establish year 3 community partnerships.
- Complete a review and update client service and accessibility standards.
- Implement any new accessibility standards or related recommendations in the timelines required, as identified by the Provincial Government's Accessibility Standards Advisory Board.
- Confirm work for the new plan through the annual planning and budgeting cycle, considering recommendations stemming from accessibility reviews completed in 2024, 2025 and 2026. Update the 2026 action plan accordingly.
- Develop the new Accessibility Plan for 2027 to 2030.

## **Monitoring and Reporting Progress**

We will update the actions for 2025 and 2026 as work progresses each year. Feedback on the plan and our progress will be captured through work with our community partners, client service surveys and employee engagement surveys. We will use this feedback, recommendations from accessibility reviews and the results of progress assessments to identify work required to close gaps and identify annual priorities.

We will monitor the work of the action plan. As per the requirements of the Accessibility Act, we will publicly report progress annually via our Annual Performance Report.

## Conclusion

We are committed to offering accessible and inclusive services to our clients. We will continue to work with community partners to identify, remove and prevent barriers to access – applying this Service Without Barriers approach as we create or modify our programs, systems and policies. We thank our clients and community partners for their sound advice and help thus far, and look forward to continuing to learn and change.

We will regularly monitor and report on progress, and will update our plan every three years as per the requirements of the Accessibility Act.

## Appendix A: Past Community Partnership Work

We thank our many community partners for their advice and guidance as we learned and changed our services to meet our clients' needs.

### Independent Living Resource Centre

- Evaluated WorkplaceNL's website to identify ways to increase accessibility features and reviewed physical workspaces.
- Changes were made to our website and online services, and online accessibility standards were identified.

### Canadian Mental Health Association – Newfoundland and Labrador

- Delivered the Changing Minds education program to our employees, involving guest speakers with lived experiences as well as Mental Health First Aid training.
- Created a better understanding of mental illness and addictions to help remove stigma and enable employees to better serve persons experiencing these issues.

### Coalition of Persons with Disabilities - Newfoundland and Labrador (COD-NL)

- Completed accessibility audits across three offices resulting in 28 recommendations that were implemented between 2017 and 2019.
- Completed employee education sessions about service barriers.
- WorkplaceNL received the COD-NL Inclusion Award in 2017.

### CHANNAL

- Completed education sessions to raise awareness and help reduce the stigma related to mental health and addictions
- Raised awareness of available community resources and supports to help increase access for staff and clients.

### Canadian Hard of Hearing Association – Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL)

- Completed accessibility review to help improve our facilities and service delivery to clients affected by sensory-related disabilities.
- Implemented hearing assistive devices in meeting rooms and amplifiers for phones in main lobbies.
- WorkplaceNL received the CHHA-NL Community Awareness Award in 2014.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind - Newfoundland and Labrador (CNIB-NL)

- Reviewed programs and service delivery to recommend improvements for clients experiencing sight challenges.
- Introduced alternate formats for WorkplaceNL materials including Braille and large print. Also introduced way-finding measures to our offices.

Association for New Canadians

- Completed education and awareness sessions related to service barriers facing new Canadians entering the workforce in our communities (as employees or employers).
- Completed cultural intelligence assessments.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

- Participated in the Understanding Changes Everything Workplace Partnership Program to support employees living with mental illness and addiction.

Other examples of work completed to improve accessibility:

- Implemented over-the-phone interpretation services for clients who are not fluent in English.
- Increased accessible parking spaces and repainted the parking lines for increased visibility.
- Relocated signage and physical barriers from front entrances.
- Adjusted door tensions for easier access.
- Introduced plain language and branding for publications and correspondence.
- Incorporated accessibility standards into our brand and writing style guides.
- Installed an emergency exit chair to help those with a physical disability escape the third floor in case of emergency.
- Changed dispensers and other bathroom features.