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# Summary of the evaluation of Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA)

## Program description

OPSA was created to help the Government of Canada meet the requirements of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) and increase awareness among departments of their responsibilities under the Public Service Accessibility Strategy (PSAS). OPSA received authority to develop and administer the Centralized Enabling Workplace Fund (CEWF) to reduce or eliminate systemic barriers within the public service.

## Evaluation approach, methodology and scope

The evaluation used multiple lines of evidence to assess OPSA's relevance, design and performance. As OPSA was created in 2018, the evaluation focused on the achievement of immediate outcomes. Specifically, the evaluation assessed whether:

- Departments and agencies are aware of their role in implementing the PSAS.
- Departments and agencies have the capacity to support accessibility and disability inclusion within their organization.
- Departments and agencies know where to find information on accessibility and workplace accommodations.
- Federal organizations outside of OPSA are leading or partnering on CEWF projects.

The evaluation was requested by OPSA to support its renewal discussions. Accordingly, this evaluation was undertaken between April 2022 and April 2023 and covered the period from program inception to March 2023.

## The evaluation concluded:

- There is an ongoing need for an organization that supports departments. This is key to continue building the capacity needed to make the public service accessible by identifying, removing and preventing barriers.
- Departments are aware of their role in implementing the Public Service Accessibility Strategy and OPSA contributed to this awareness. The legal requirement that all departments develop and publish an accessibility plan by December 2022 likely supported this awareness.
- Departmental capacity to support accessibility and disability inclusion is mixed, with some organizations facing significant challenges. OPSA made a positive difference in supporting departmental capacity, though further efforts are needed to build the capacity of all organizations.
- Departments generally know where to find information on accessibility and workplace accommodations, and OPSA contributed to this knowledge.

- Departments and agencies state that since August 2018, they have taken concrete actions to remove barriers to accessibility in their workplace and services.
- Notwithstanding some progress in applying an accessibility lens to policies and processes, its application within departments is limited.
- Initially OPSA led most of the CEWF initiatives, this evolved until more active projects were being led by other federal organizations or with federal partnerships, and CEWF projects with multiple partners also increased over time.
- CEWF projects have contributed several improvements in workplace accommodation practices and processes, with different opinions on their efficacy.
- While progress is being made, the federal public service workplace is not barrier-free for all employees.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. OPSA expand its awareness activities by:
  - a. Advising and guiding those responsible for implementing accommodation practices;
  - b. Advising and guiding departments and agencies that struggle with capacity;
  - c. Disseminating the results of the CEWF projects.
2. OPSA monitor and foster departmental performance measurement on accessibility and accommodation processes. This would enable OPSA and key partners to share methodologies and tools that support departments to identify gaps, set targets, and track accessibility change over time.

3. To reach a barrier-free public service by 2040, OPSA develop options with input from relevant stakeholders, such as departmental accessibility leads and networks of employees with disabilities, to ensure investments in the Accessibility Strategy, GC Workplace Accessibility Passport and the commitment to hire 5,000 persons with disabilities by 2025, whether OPSA sunsets or not.

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