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Public Services and Procurement Canada

Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative Evaluation: Summary

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Initiative description

The objective of the Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative (AGBEI) is to conduct accessibility assessments to identify improvements in Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings. These assessments, known as technical accessibility assessments (TAA), evaluate PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) Crown-owned and lease-purchase buildings against the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-2018 ¹ accessibility standard to determine their current accessibility compliance levels and cost estimates

for implementing accessibility improvements. Additionally, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) includes an engagement component to ensure the contribution of disability communities, including PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Persons with Disabilities Network, to identify accessibility barriers in the workplace. Also, AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) pilots initiatives that include accessibility products/technologies and low-cost, high impact, short-term accessibility improvements to improve the accessibility conditions of the built environment.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation of the AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) assessed progress on the completion of technical accessibility assessments and their results while also assessing the relevance and performance (effectiveness and efficiency) of the Initiative over the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 to the fiscal year 2022 to 2023.

The evaluation was undertaken by the Evaluation Services Directorate (ESD) at PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada), in compliance with the requirements of the Treasury Board Policy on Results and in response to senior management information needs. A variety of data collection methods were used to assess the Initiative. The ESD (Evaluation Services Directorate) conducted interviews, a review of operational and reporting information, case studies of pilot projects and a document review. The conduct of the evaluation encountered challenges which are common to this type of engagement. Any limitations identified for specific methods have been mitigated by the use of findings from multiple lines of evidence in the preparation of the evaluation's conclusions. None of the limitations encountered were significant enough to prevent reporting on the issues identified for this evaluation.

Evaluation findings

The following provides the key findings from the evaluation which are presented by issues of relevance, performance (effectiveness) and performance (efficiency).

Relevance

1. AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) plays a key role in supporting PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s response to accessibility needs in the built environment of PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada)'s Crown-owned and lease-purchase real property portfolio. There is an opportunity to continue and expand the scope of the initiative in light of:

- the importance of better supporting diversity and inclusion
- the significant proportion of leased buildings
- the move towards hybrid work environments
- the impact of the evolving accessibility standards on the built environment

2. The Accessible Canada Act has led to the implementation of many programs and initiatives targeting barriers to accessibility both across the GC (Government of Canada) and within each department. Having a better understanding of accessibility initiatives, especially those targeting the built environment, across the GC (Government of Canada) would allow AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) to better understand and communicate with the other programs and initiatives while also clarifying its own objectives and results.

Performance: Effectiveness

3. AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has been essential to increasing the availability of information and awareness on what is needed to enable improved accessibility of the built environment.

This includes:

- an increased knowledge of current accessibility conditions of the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) portfolio
- what improvements would be needed to bring the portfolio up to and beyond standards
- costs to implement these improvements
- the feasibility of introducing specific new technologies

There are, however, opportunities to further improve AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) data such as coverage, comparability and accuracy to better support the reliability of cost estimates.

4. While not mandated to implement accessibility improvements, the Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Built Environment (AIBE) supported the implementation of accessibility improvements across the portfolio which were funded by RPS (Real Property Services) as part of custodian responsibilities for the PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) portfolio.

5. AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) has used a variety of approaches to engage with key stakeholders with the intent to improve accessibility of the built environment with limitations encountered in some areas. There is the potential to enhance stakeholder outreach by utilizing additional approaches to engagement as well as expanding engagements to reach a larger range of respondents.

Performance: Efficiency

6. AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative) is on track to complete its activities within budget with total expenditures anticipated by the program to be less than the original budget as a result of changes to the scope of work over the course of its implementation. Total expenditures to conduct all assessments by 2023 to 2024 are expected to total \$4.1 million.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by the evaluation and were accepted by the Department. A management action plan has been prepared in response to each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) continues the accessibility assessment process while ensuring appropriate, ongoing consideration of the evolving environment (diversity and inclusion, standard updates, leased buildings within the hybrid work environment context) in order to provide timely, complete and accurate information available to support decision-making related to the built environment.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) enhance interactions with stakeholders including the other departments and building users to ensure common understanding of AGBEI (Accessible Government Built Environment Initiative)'s purpose and scope and appropriate information sharing amongst the stakeholders.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) develops a standardized methodology for estimating the costs of implementing accessibility improvements, which include provisions for contingencies, regional cost factors and other add-ons to the base cost estimate in order to improve the quality and reliability of its costing data.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that PSPC (Public Services and Procurement Canada) implements more effective engagement approaches with all building users, including people with disabilities and disability support organizations (for example Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Rick Hansen Foundation; Canadian Association of the Deaf) to obtain more comprehensive views on the improvements made and needed as well as assessments of building user satisfaction.

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- 1 CSA (Canadian Standards Association) Standard for the Accessible Design of the Built Environment.
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