

# ACCESSABILITY PLAYBOOK

*Delivering accessible client service*

Developed by the Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service  
Strategic Directions, Citizen Service Branch  
Employment and Social Development Canada

**Draft for discussion**, February 2021

# Summary of topics

## Introduction

Who we are  
Our story behind the Playbook  
About the Playbook  
Meet Billy's friends

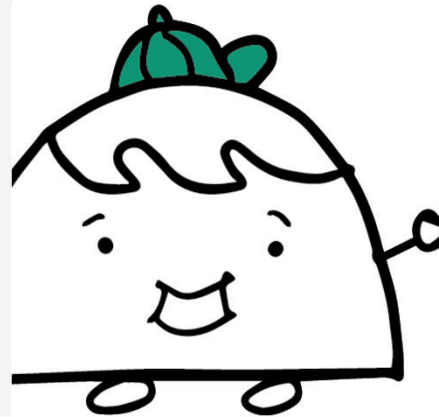
## Plays in action

**Play 1** Learn about accessibility, it's more than you think  
**Play 2** Understand how barriers affect persons with disabilities  
**Play 3** Involve persons with disabilities from the start  
**Play 4** Design experiences to be more inclusive  
**Play 5** Make communications accessible for everyone  
**Play 6** Develop the skills to provide accessible service  
**Play 7** Be part of an accessible culture

## Inspiring tools

Business Intelligence Model  
CX Survey Measurement Model  
Accessible Client Service Journey Map templates  
Accessible Client Service Assessment checklist  
Sources and references

Everyone has a role to  
play in accessibility!



“

We all benefit from a society and an economy without barriers to inclusion. When persons with disabilities can participate in all aspects of society, including accessing employment, resources and services, it enriches Canada's economy.

— ESDC National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) 2020 Campaign

”



Who we are

## The Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service

We work for Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Our small team is part of the Strategic Directions Directorate in Citizen Service Branch.

We have built our capacity to better understand the reality of how people live with a disability, and the service barriers that create a challenge when trying to access government programs and services.

### Our mandate

- Conduct research to improve our understanding of the service barriers
- Provide advice to programs and service delivery channels
- Lead initiatives to improve accessibility of programs and service delivery
- Share best practices and learn from others

### How to reach us

If you want to share your thoughts, exchange ideas or have any questions, send an email at [AccessSV.CSB@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:AccessSV.CSB@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca).

## Our story behind the Playbook

The AccessAbility Playbook is part of a broader commitment to make Canada's public service the most accessible and inclusive in the world.

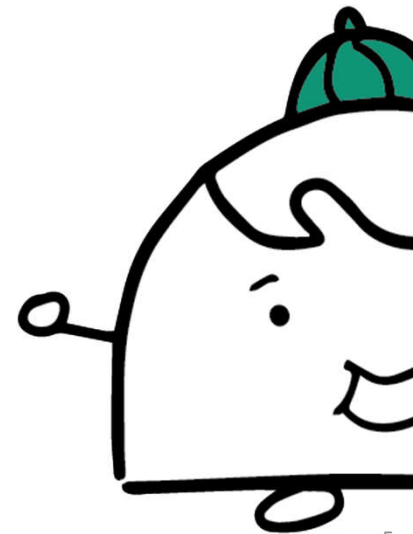
This is our way to engage and share with others what we know about accessibility in client service. We hope this is the start of many conversations. By reading this, you are one step closer to making this possible.

In July 2019, the Government of Canada enacted the [Accessible Canada Act](#). The Act requires government departments to increase the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities or functional limitations, including when designing and delivering programs and services.

The Office of Public Service Accessibility launched a government-wide strategy titled: [Nothing without us](#). This Playbook contributes to Goal 4 "Equip public servants to design and deliver accessible programs and services".

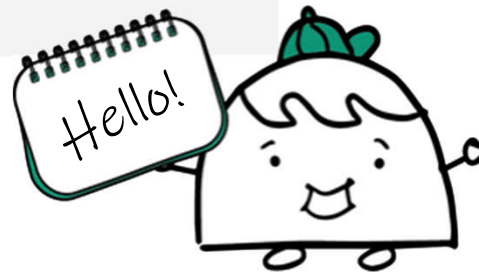
ESDC developed a Roadmap to Improve Accessible Client Service. The Roadmap proposed various accessibility solutions for the Department to adopt and make improvements on how persons with disabilities access ESDC programs and services.

The Centre of Expertise (CoE) for Accessible Client Service was a key recommendation identified in the Roadmap.



## About the Playbook

Hi. My name is **Billy**. I am thrilled to be your guide and have you tag along this accessibility journey.



### Why a playbook

To raise awareness in government about accessibility in client service and how to remove barriers in programs and service delivery.

### Who is it for

Anyone seeking to better understand accessibility in client service and more specifically for those who initiate, design or deliver government programs and services.

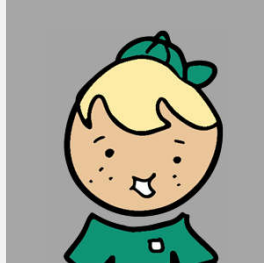
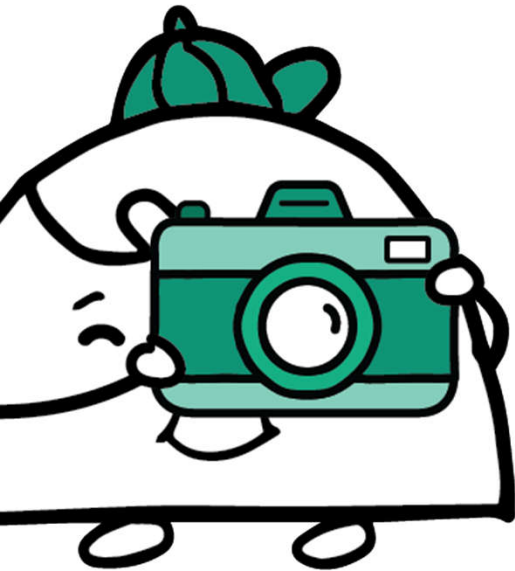
### How to use it

Use each play as a guide to explore lessons learned and best practices. Find tips and tools that will help you in making service delivery more accessible.

## Meet Billy's friends

Before we start, I want you to meet my friends. All six of them have different needs and expectations.

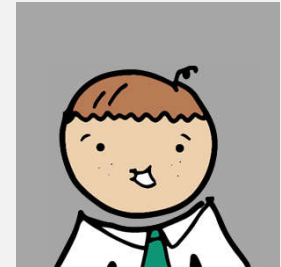
Play by play, I will share meaningful insights about their experience and challenges when trying to access government programs and services.



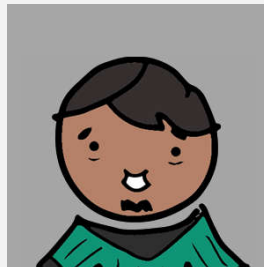
Mark, 25 years old  
Lives with a **physical** disability



Nora, 49 years old  
Lives with a **mental health** condition



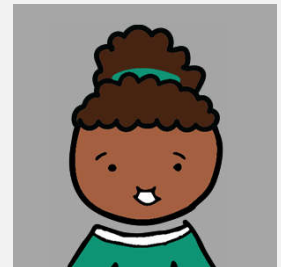
Luca, 31 years old  
Lives with a **cognitive** disability



Jeremy, 44 years old  
Lives with a **communication** disability



Léo, 67 years old  
Lives with severe **hearing** loss



Sophie, 36 years old  
Born with a **visual** impairment

# Play 1

Learn about accessibility,  
it's more than you think

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# Barrier-free access for everyone

Over the years, many decisions were made to better serve Canadians. However, some of these decisions might have created obstacles that make it difficult, or even sometimes impossible, for persons with disabilities to access government programs and services.

## What is accessibility

Accessibility can be described as the “ability to access” without encountering any barriers. Barriers are the obstacles for persons with disabilities that prevents them from doing the things many of us take for granted. In practice, accessibility is about having a barrier-free access, being treated with dignity, having meaningful options for interacting with government and getting consistent information everywhere across all service channels.

Everyone benefits from accessibility.

## Why accessibility matters

The Government of Canada serves millions of people that have diverse needs and expectations. The challenge is to serve them better equally. We need to change because it is the right thing to do. Accessibility is about respecting *human rights*.

**All Canadians are entitled to receive government services and benefits.**

## Your role as a public servant

Your job is to make sure that all Canadians have meaningful options for interacting with government, regardless of their personal situation. Learn from each other so that you can do better.

**Equitable access should be part of what we do every day.**



# Existing client service barriers

Check out five service areas that were identified as creating challenges for people living with a disability or functional limitation.



## Physical Space

Clients may find it difficult to travel to a building because of the location. For others it could be signage that is not clearly in their line-of-sight or it might be the background noise that is disturbing. Some design elements can make it difficult to use stairs or navigate doorways and hallways. For some, the layout of the rooms and how the furniture is displayed can be a tripping hazard. In addition, features such as plexiglas barriers can also cause challenges for clients with hearing impairment.



## Awareness & Attitude

If you do not promote accessibility features, clients may not feel confident in their abilities to access your program or service. Client can miss out on important information if communication is not effective and timely. If employees do not have proper training, it may result in misunderstanding, confusing or dismissive-behaviour. It may also lead to assumptions or unfair judgments about a person's ability or appearance. Always remember that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity.



## Policies & Processes

The policies and processes you create to implement existing laws and regulations can make access difficult for clients and have negative impacts on client needs and expectations. An example would be a service representative that is not authorized to fill out a form on behalf of the client. This can present a barrier to accessing a service or benefit.



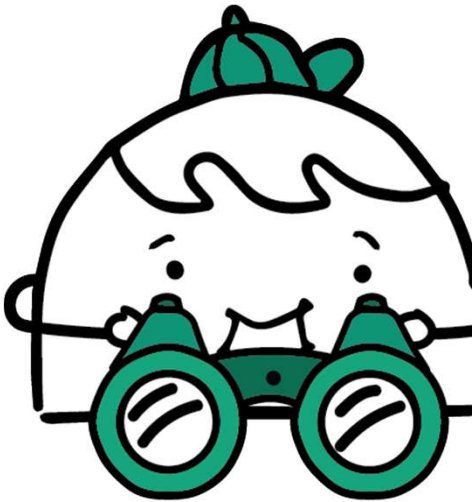
## Technology

Some systems are not set up or designed to support the use of appropriate tools and devices such as screen readers, accessible keyboards and audio player. This also applies to systems that do not allow for compatibility with client assistive devices used at home. For example, the accessibility of websites and electronic equipment within the premises such as wayfinding devices, accessible self-service kiosks, the need to use a joystick instead of a mouse, etc. The World Wide Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is the starting point, always strive to do better.



## Language & Information

Clients may not be able to understand if the information is too complex, government communications has earned a reputation for being difficult to understand. Accessible formats – and accessible ways to obtaining accessible formats – can not be an afterthought. Similarly, sign language interpretation and not forcing screen readers to go through long privacy statements that sighted clients can scroll past, are essential elements of respect. Communicating in plain language is essential for some persons with disabilities to access information.



# Most common types of disability

The personal situation of someone living with one or more types of disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Symptoms can be visible or hidden. Genetic disorders, illness or accidents can hinder a person's full and equal participation in society.

## Physical

Difficulty with mobility, standing while waiting or reaching counters and door knobs. Includes mobility, flexibility, dexterity issues and pain.

**Examples:** Musculoskeletal issues, neuropathic problems, visceral issues, difficulty walking, using fingers, bending down or reaching.

## Mental health

Difficulty with functioning in certain environments (noisy, crowded), concentrating or processing information. Feeling anxious, depressed, confused or having mood changes.

**Examples:** Anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, anorexia.

## Cognitive

Difficulty with perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning. Difficulty with understanding written and spoken language, meeting new people or following instructions.

**Examples:** Down's Syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, dementia, Alzheimer's, brain injuries, dyslexia, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## Communication

Difficulty with pronouncing words or making oneself understood.

**Examples:** Apraxia of speech, cluttering, stuttering, muteness, Cerebral Palsy where muscles move in uncoordinated ways and speech is slurred.

## Hearing

Difficulty with hearing another person talking (either in-person or on phone), especially in a noisy environment, or pronouncing words clearly.

**Examples:** Hearing impairment (mild to profound hearing loss) or deafness, may include conditions such as vertigo or tinnitus.

## Vision

Difficulty with maneuvering through an office, reading forms and signage or seeing faces.

**Examples:** blindness, photosensitivity, visual stimuli (e.g. quick, bright flashes)



# Play 2

**Understand how barriers affect  
persons with disabilities**

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# Someone living with a physical disability or a condition affecting mobility and agility

Many in this client group have visible disabilities. It is important to keep proper accessibility measures up to date, well understood, tested and maintained for functionality. Any improvements should go beyond the building codes and standards. For example, make it a business requirement to have service centres located near public transit, have parking close to the main entrance and test automatic door openers each day as part of standard procedures. This can help ensure the clients have a positive experience, even before they interact with your employees. Enable clients to get to your office and move around easily by having ramps where necessary, wide hallways and doorways, and accessible washrooms. Also think about integrating multi-level counters as part of your interior design standards.

To enhance the experience even more, you can have trained greeters (concierge) to welcome and screen people as they come in. You can even dedicate a priority area where clients have the opportunity to identify their needs or constraints to reduce their wait time to speak with a service agent.

Someone with a pain-related disability may not have much time or concentration to search for forms or contact information. They need to feel confident that they can complete their tasks. For someone with dexterity issues, holding a pen might be difficult. In this case, service agents should also be authorized to fill out a form on behalf of the client and provide a signature guide to assist in signing documents. Clients may also need ergonomic or specially designed keyboard or mouse such as on-screen keyboard with trackball, joysticks, or other pointing devices.

## Possible in-person experience

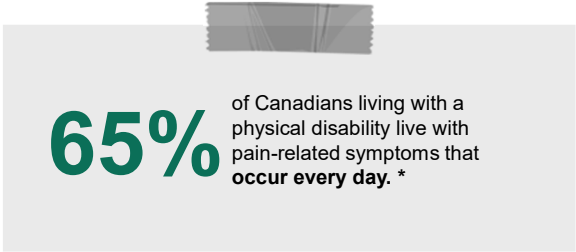
- Unable to walk very far or use stairs
- Difficulty holding onto railing
- Difficulty holding a pen and pulling up a chair to sit down
- Prone to fatigue and losing balance
- Unable to stand for long periods
- May require a wheelchair to move around

## Possible phone experience

- May require more time to complete tasks
- Difficulty holding a phone and dialing or pressing numbers quickly
- Difficulty focusing when calls are long
- Shooting pain distracts
- Difficulty taking notes, communicating or concentrating

## Possible online experience

- Visual problems due to headaches and migraines
- Difficulty typing, using a mouse or touch screens
- May require head pointer, mouth stick and other aids for typing
- Difficulty clicking small icons
- Difficulty sitting for long periods of time



\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

“Often the counter height is not ideal and I need to pass my documentation above my head. And when I need to sign and the pen is attached to a string, I can’t even use it.”

— Mark



# Someone living with mental-health challenges

While mental health is rapidly becoming more understood by the general public, it is still a stigmatized condition. Persons living with mental health conditions face attitudinal barriers daily; in most cases, mental health issues are entirely invisible. However, when symptoms are apparent, persons may be judged harshly, making the situation even worse. Insensitivity and judgmental behaviour can be upsetting and may be a trigger for escalated behaviour.

Service by phone can be disorientating or confusing due to difficulty with focusing. Interactive voice response (IVR) calls can be very difficult to go through because of the series of options. Memory or comprehension challenges can sometimes force a person to hang up. Having the option of "press 0" to speak directly with an agent can be very helpful.

This client group can have a hard time accessing online services. Web designs should consider how the information is displayed and show clear information pathways (i.e. breaking down steps in the application process). Online application forms should not be time-bound. It should allow clients to save and continue at a later time should they need a break. Long-periods of focus causes fatigue, which is worsened by noisy environments. Also, when websites are not in plain language or not using simple infographics to convey information, it can become overwhelming.

## Possible in-person experience

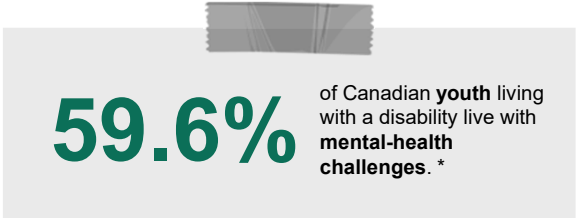
- Symptoms are misinterpreted
- Sudden change in tone and manner when being judged

## Possible phone experience

- May require very simple questions and explanations
- Difficulty concentrating and sudden change in tone and manner

## Possible online experience

- Difficulty finding or processing information if too detailed
- May be limited in the amount or kind of activities



\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

“Why is the form so long and so complex to fill out?”

— Nora



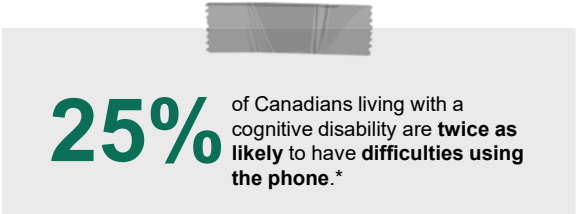
# Someone living with a cognitive disability

A cognitive disability is described as a limitation affecting the brain or intellectual capacity, as well as learning abilities. It may be a result of a genetic condition, brain injury or degenerative disease such as Alzheimer's or Dementia. It relates to perception, attention, memory, motor skills, language or visual processing when trying to understand information, beginning or completing a task, remembering things or making decisions.

Clients may demonstrate a reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills, and to do things on their own. One thing to keep in mind is some of these individuals do not recognize themselves as having functional limitations, for instance those with Down's Syndrome, Autism or Cerebral Palsy. In other cases, learning disabilities are not apparent unless the client discloses their disability. For example, people living with Dyslexia or Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

There is a preference for going in-person to receive service. In fact, within the smaller communities, service agents get to know the person and it makes it easier to adapt to their specific needs and preferences. However, in other instances, attitudinal barriers can be present. For example, when a person's legal capacity is questioned, it may lead to a frustrating service experience and exclusion. Policies and practices need to be examined to ensure full and equitable participation in society and access to services. For example, service agents should be given the authorities to fill out forms on behalf of the client.

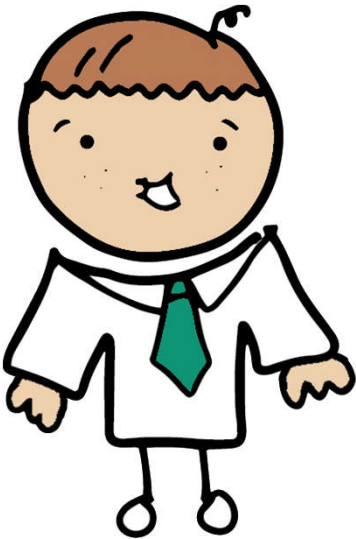
Some symptoms may be amplified as a result of the physical environment. Bright lights, loud noises or crowded areas may trigger challenges. During face-to-face interactions, clients may be accompanied by another person, may require text to be explained, and may need additional reminders of small details. They may not be able to self-serve, but may be reluctant to tell they can't. Specific training for staff may help reassure and support clients with learning disabilities. For example, service agents should be able to offer assistance when the client is filling out a form, and assess if they are eligible for other benefits.



\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

**“I often struggle to understand what I read and it takes me longer to process information.”**

— Luca



# Someone living with a cognitive disability (continued)

Phone service may limit the ability to communicate needs and may be overwhelming, or be difficult to understand. Clients may become easily distracted and have difficulty focusing on multiple tasks. They may also experience difficulties hearing verbal instructions or questions if there are other noises in the room. Interactive voice response (IVR) calls can be very difficult to go through when the series of options is lengthy. Memory or comprehension challenges can sometimes force a person to hang up. Having the option of "press 0" to speak directly with an agent can be very helpful.

This client group can have a hard time accessing online services. Web designers should consider how the information is displayed and be able to show clear information pathways such as breaking down steps in the application process. Online application forms should not be time-bound to allow clients to save and continue at a later time. Pictures, scrolling images and color contrast can be particularly difficult to navigate. Keep navigation consistent from page to page and ensure the user knows what to expect. You can also include information in other formats such as videos or images to assist those who may have trouble understanding words and sentences or require more time to read. In this case, specialized fonts or text to speech reader capabilities can be very helpful.

## Possible in-person experience

- May become anxious in crowded areas
- May require more time to be assisted
- May require text to be read aloud
- Difficulty finding the right words to communicate clearly and effectively
- May experience confusion and not be aware of surroundings or whereabouts
- Difficulty understanding or retaining details
- May present inappropriate body language and/or talking too loudly or too softly
- Difficulty reading facial expressions, body gestures and/or tone of voice

## Possible phone experience

- Difficulty taking notes
- Unable to retain information and remember full sentences
- May take long pauses while searching for the right words
- May require very simple questions and explanations
- May require more time to be assisted and may provide incorrect details
- Easily distracted by background noises
- Difficulty paying attention to verbal instructions or questions, sometimes not remembering or understanding verbal information

## Possible online experience

- May require more time to find information and is easily distracted
- Unable to use a computer without help
- May require frequent breaks away from a screen and clear sequenced steps
- Difficulty filling out an application form
- May require additional time to complete a task
- Difficulty filling out an application form
- May require additional time to complete a task



## Someone living with a condition affecting speech and language or communication

On a daily basis, this client group faces significant attitudinal barriers. There is often judgement towards someone who has difficulty communicating their needs. For example, the client may have difficulty speaking or have a slurred speech.

In society, these people are under-represented at forums and public consultations. Communication devices such as voice amplification devices, tablets and smart phones can often be helpful.

They often have their own diverse way of communicating, which might include Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods such as gestures, pictures, letter boards and communication devices. Awareness of these methods in service delivery would go a long way in reducing the attitudinal barriers.

Issues with service on the phone are most prominent for this client group. Misunderstanding the client's situation can lead to attitudinal barriers. For instance, misunderstanding slurred speech as a result of a stroke can be perceived by someone on the phone as someone being drunk. Others may stutter and have longer pauses or making sounds when speaking. This is often mistaken for a prank call.

As Stephen Hawking, a person with a communication disability, once said « we have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation, and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock the vast potential of persons with disabilities ».

### Possible in-person experience

- Difficulty asking questions, reading and writing
- May require more time to be assisted
- May require agent to adapt client service in respect of their specific needs

### Possible phone experience

- Difficulty asking questions
- Difficulty articulating words or sentences
- May take long pauses while searching for the right words

### Possible online experience

- Difficulty navigating when there is a lot of text and not enough simple photos or videos
- May require alternate means of communications (e.g., email)

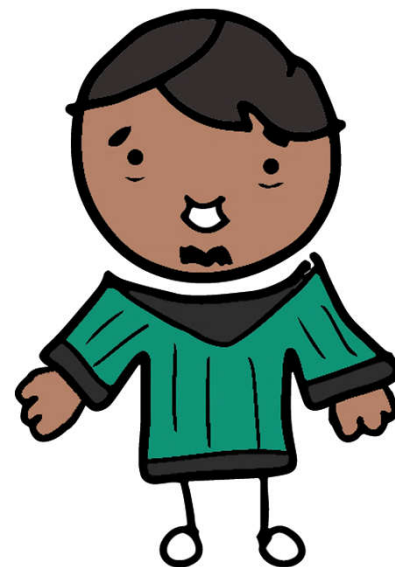
440,000

Canadians have speech and language disabilities that are **not caused by Deafness or significant hearing loss.** \*

\* Data source: Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC)  
<https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/communication-disabilities/statistics/>

**“When I talk, I often have to pause and search for the right words. You simply need to be patient with me”**

— Jeremy



# Someone living with a condition affecting hearing

Every day, people who are deaf may face negative perception, beliefs and behaviours regarding their capability. Many people assume that culturally, this client group understands written English or French. However, grammatical rules in sign language are different than the ones used in French or English.

Office design must consider the struggles that hard of hearing clients experience in large spaces. Glass partitions, background noise and room design contribute to challenge. Counter loops for clients using hearing aids can reduce background noise and facilitate client interactions.

There is generally a need for training to address the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Video remote interpreting services can be beneficial for clients who use sign language to communicate and would allow for equal access. For example, often these clients are required to book an in-person interpreter, leaving some of them without access to the services they need right away. Ideally, it would provide real-time interpreter.

Many systemic barriers exist for this client group. On the phone, call trees are challenging for Deaf or hard of hearing individuals. Having the option of "press 0" to speak directly with an agent is always preferred. TTY (Text Telephone or TDD, Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) calls are perceived to be rarely answered with the same frequency as regular calls.

For a person that is hard of hearing, media players can help display captions and provide options to adjust the text size and colour of captions.

Improvements need to benefit all and not create barriers for others. For example, quick bright flashes are a good way to signal to those with hearing limitations but it has to have the right frequency that does not cause seizures for someone else.

### Possible in-person experience

- Difficulty reading lips if the view is not clear or if the conversation is too fast
- May require visual cues to complement the usual audio cues from alarm systems (bells, audio messages, etc.)
- May require a sign language interpreter
- May use a pen and paper to communicate.
- Difficulty focusing with background noise; white noise may help or worsen the situation, depending on the specific condition.

### Possible phone experience

- May require a TTY phone number or VRS option to obtain assistance from an agent

### Possible online experience

- May require displaying subtitles, captions, or written transcripts to understand the content of online videos

**35%** of Canadians living with a hearing disability **also have a seeing disability.** \*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

“Don’t shout at me; speak clearly and naturally, and at a moderate pace”

— Léo



## Someone living with a condition affecting vision

Not all who live with vision impairments are completely blind. Some may be partially sighted or have specific restrictions such as tunnel vision. Others might not be able to differentiate between darkness and light. Many issues are encountered by persons living with a visual impairment occur when they navigate an unknown space.

In-person facilities need to have points of visual definition so that persons with visual limitations can navigate the space. For example, large glass doors should have a high contrast vertical strip. Tactile markings are helpful when the path is properly indicated. Tactile markings in floors should start from the street and lead to the point of entry.

Persons with visual impairments or other sight-related disabilities benefit from high colour contrast signage at universal height. This means that the sign should be relatively near everyone's eye level. The placement is key when considering clients with tunnel vision, who may need to be relatively close to a sign to be able to read it. Signs also need to be in other physical form such as Braille, embossed/tactile high contrast numbers or letters.

Any queuing display systems need to be in high contrast colours and avoid using red dots. Wayfinding systems that use beacon technologies can further help clients find their way to an office. This works with Bluetooth and in collaboration with a client's mobile device. It provides real-time navigation information and sends a signal (when the app is downloaded). The instructions are read out loud and allow the client to navigate the space independently.

Since there are many beacon systems that exist, make sure clients are aware of the one you have in place. By doing so, clients can easily switch between the various phone applications and have the right assistance to

get to the service counter. Security systems and all types of communication should be heard and seen. This is important for those who get information primarily by hearing. This includes alerts for emergencies, safety, security, and general announcements.

Most people with vision or print restrictions benefit from alternate formats that provides access to visual media and announcements. Multiple formats should include: accessible PDF, Braille, large print, audio cassette, computer diskette or CD-Rom, magnifiers and e-text. For example, emails versus mail will allow clients to use text-to-speech technologies.

### Possible in-person experience

- Difficulty understanding if people speak too quickly
- May feel "shouted at" if people speak too loudly
- May require building signs to be offered in alternate formats

### Possible phone experience

- May feel offended when people forget about the visual impairment and use insensitive language (e.g., "have a look" or "see what I mean")

### Possible online experience

- May require assistive technology and "alt tags" to describe an image or content and uses a pen reader
- Difficulty understanding information if too many bullets are used in a list or table format is too complex
- Difficulty navigating using a mouse or touchpad.

**85%** of Canadians with a seeing disability use **one or more aids** or assistive devices. \*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

**"Just because I don't see well, doesn't mean I can't do things. One of the biggest issues is that the forms and documents are not accessible to me."**

— Sophie



# Play 3

**Involve persons with disabilities  
from the start**

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“

"Our communities are diverse - we live in different places, with different circumstances. We are old, young, live with a disability and difficulties, and speak multiple languages; we are diverse individuals and communities. However, often goods and services are designed as if we are all the same."

— Microsoft

”

# Recognize the value of including persons with disabilities

The more you know about your clients, the better you are at understanding their needs and expectations.

## Recruitment of persons with disabilities

When you conduct research and user testing (UX), partner with organizations that can introduce you to persons with disabilities willing to participate and offer feedback. You will then discover insights you won't gain from reading accessibility standards documentation — like how to create a great client experience (CX) for anyone with permanent, situational, or temporary physical or cognitive challenges.

The approach you use to recruit user testers will exclude some profiles so use multiple approaches to ensure diversity. While many individuals have a disability, each disability is different so be careful not to dismiss outliers in the data as errors or `white noise`. It might be a person with a disability giving you feedback about what doesn't work.

Test your channels, processes and tools while ensuring equal participation.



## Engagement and consultations

Reach out to non-government organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups that work directly with persons with disabilities. Focus on building long-term relationships and leverage on their expertise, knowledge, tools, resources and networks for ongoing engagement and continuous service improvements.

Service Canada's [Client Centric Policy Playbook 1.0](#) provides helpful information for engagement. Additionally ESDC has developed guidance for running [accessible consultations](#).

### Tips

Avoid "consultation fatigue". Before you reach out to specific client groups, try to build your engagement efforts by coordinating across all government departments that have similar needs.

## Feedback mechanisms

Anytime you share information across channels, make sure you provide options to gather client feedback. This can either be done verbally, by email, by phone, through online surveys or feedback forms. Other methods can also include outcomes from stakeholder consultations or advocacy groups, social media posts, blogs, site visits / observation shadowing, focus groups interviews. Do your service representatives know how to convey informal feedback to someone in a position to address it?

## Measurements for client satisfaction

Use different ways to track client satisfaction across all service delivery channels. Find out things like what is preventing clients from feeling positive about their experience, what are some of the challenges, what is not consistent, and how you can do better. Over the past four years, Service Canada has been refining its Client Experience surveys to better understand the challenges that clients with disabilities experience.



Check out the CX survey measurements.

# Gather rich client data

Your goal is to help clients be more independent and give them confidence that they can access government programs and services without difficulties.

To do so, you need to understand your clients and listen to what they have to say. After all, you are creating the experience for them - It should reflect the diversity of people who use your service.

Bring together multiple sources of client insights. This puts you in a great position to help support decision-making and create meaningful experiences that are easy, effective and for clients of all abilities.

- Choose a random sample of clients that well represents the participation of persons with disabilities.
- Review your current methods to ensure clients are reachable.
- Ensure your co-design process are truly accessible.

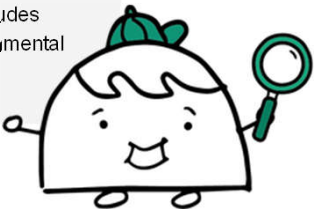
Use innovative tools such as journey mapping to help you identify the service barriers that are present across your channels and validate potential accessibility solutions.

Find out if your program or service is fully accessible. Conduct an early assessment of your accessibility features and evaluate whether or not you meet the needs of people with a wider range of abilities.

- ⚙️ [Check out the Accessible Client Service Journey Map templates.](#)
- ⚙️ [Check out the assessment tool related to accessibility in client service.](#)

## Did you know...

Client insights is an in-depth knowledge about your client (e.g. demographic, behavioural, needs-based, attitudes and feelings) generated by various types of environmental scans and research.



# Play 4

Design experiences to be more inclusive

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# Inclusion Principal: Universal Design

Universal design is an approach to intentionally design and deliver programs and services without creating barriers. While it helps ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities, it is seen as good design practice that meets the needs of anyone who needs to access your programs and services.

## Universal design is based on 7 principles \*

- 1 Equitable use.** Offer the same service and information where possible and where this is not possible, ensure equivalent access. For example, someone who needs more time to process or remember information, make it so online application forms have no time limits to allow for breaks, a longer pause, or recovery at a later date with a save for later option.
- 2 Flexibility in use.** Provide clients with various options in how they would like to use the program or service. For example, establish different ways for clients to provide feedback, complaints, and suggestions across all of your channels such as an online form, in writing or over the phone using a relay service, if required.
- 3 Simple and intuitive to use.** Reduce complexity and ensure it is easy to accommodate the various literacy and language skills. For example, provide signage at every point of access and in alternative formats such as the use of wayfinder beacons, content in braille or large print to reduce anxiety and confusion.
- 4 Perceptible information.** Information is communicated effectively regardless of the client's ability. For example, support media players that display captions and provide audio options with adjustable size and colour for someone that is deaf or has low vision.

- 5 Tolerance for error.** Encourages design to minimize hazards and poor outcomes or accidental or unintended actions. For example, display furniture to ensure that no object is obstructing and avoid people tripping or falling over chairs that are misplaced.
- 6 Low physical effort.** Design does not require undue effort and can be used efficiently. For example, conduct a daily accessibility assessment of your service area such as take notice of building or city renovations that are underway or test functionality of door openers.
- 7 Size and space for approach and use.** Provide enough space for people standing and seating while they are using an assistive device. For example, have multi-level service counters to accommodate wheelchairs or give the ability to someone with physical limitations to utilize as a supported piece of equipment.

Inclusive design is everyone's responsibility. Don't be reluctant to connect with people such as subject matter experts, policy makers, designers and front-line staff.



\* Source: Universal Design Network of Canada (UDNC)  
<https://universaldesign.ca/>

# Leave no one behind

Services are often designed and delivered in ways that create obstacles for persons needing the service. Clients often face multiple barriers and a single barrier can be enough to keep an individual from accessing service – even if a service is “technically accessible” by meeting existing standards... Always ask yourself if your client is actually able to access the service.

For example, if you only target “mainstream” clients, you will probably end up forgetting about the deaf community or the ones visually impaired and how they will become aware of your program. Think about how an individual with diminished memory will collect information about your program for when they need it.

## Intersectionality

To be truly inclusive, you need to think of your clients as complete human beings. A person with disability is more than just their disability. Everyone has multiple characteristics that we need to keep in mind.

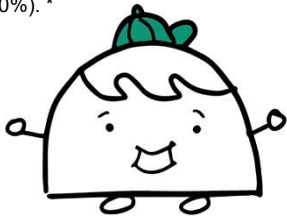
Intersectionality is about a diversity of characteristics for which society, or your organization has created barriers that prevent some individuals from accessing services. Find out what characteristics are likely to be seen among your clients.

Always work toward finding out who are the remaining individuals not accessing your service. For programs that include people in vulnerable situations, it is unlikely that it is random individuals willingly choosing to opt out – and a small percentage of a large program is still a lot of clients. It may be those most in need that are missing out on the program intended to help them.

Although this playbook is focused on persons with disabilities, here are other client demographics that can be intersecting, creating unique considerations for your service delivery:

- **Indigenous Peoples** – In 2017, 32% of First Nations people living off reserve, 30% of Métis and 19% of Inuit had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities.\*\* This intersects with considerations specific to this community, such as: location, language, historical relationship with the government. Many remote, on-reserve communities do not have paved roads, easy internet access (satellite only, for example), fly-in only communities.
- **Poverty** –living in poverty implies the individual is in a more precarious situation meaning that service delivery problems can have more dramatic impacts on outcomes.
- **Youth** – mental health-related disabilities are the most prevalent type of disability: 8% of Canadians between age 15 and 24 years.\*
- **Seniors** – almost half (47%) of seniors over age 75 report have a disability. Dexterity, hearing and physical disabilities increase significantly with age.\*
- **LGBTQ2+** – In addition to the challenges created by society at large, transgender persons may have increased need to deal with government while transitioning genders, which may coincide with temporary disabilities.
- **Victims of violence** – survivors of domestic violence have a significantly higher likelihood of brain-related injuries, such as concussions.
- **People living in rural and remote locations**
- **People who are incarcerated and/or previously incarcerated**
- **Visible minority groups**
- **Newcomers**
- **Women** – 24% of women are more likely to have a disability than men (20%). \*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)  
\*\* 2019 Aboriginal Peoples Survey



# Good decisions that create a positive experience

Inclusive design aims to remove the service barriers that affects your client's ability to obtain the services to which they are entitled.

When you develop services, each decision can limit the accessibility of the service. Few policy objectives start out inaccessible; they become less accessible as you make decisions about applications, reporting, interacting, etc.. Some of those decisions may be necessary, perhaps for integrity, but has every alternative really been considered?

After exploring all alternatives, the remaining barriers can be examined to determine how to get around them when they affect someone's ability to access the service. Service design needs to be proactive in finding solutions before the barrier affects a client.

Government uses multiple channels to deliver programs and services. These mainly include **in-person**, **phone** and **online**. No one channel is accessible for everyone hence alternative approaches are key to inclusion.

## Curb cut effect

While accessibility focuses on key considerations for persons with disabilities, inclusive design considers from the start, how something might be easy and useful for as many people as possible. One example is the **curb cut effect** – a term used to describe what happens when an accessibility feature benefits more people than the group it was originally intended for, such as a ramp or path for wheelchair users. This also benefit parents pushing strollers, users of walking aids or people carrying heavy packages.

## Everyone is unique

Experiences of disability vary. Some disabilities are considered mild, and some more severe. Some are progressive, some fluctuate, and some are stable. Some individuals are born with a disability, and many develop them later in life. 71% of persons with disabilities have more than one type of disability, and so may experience a variety of disability experiences. All individuals with disabilities need to have access to services.

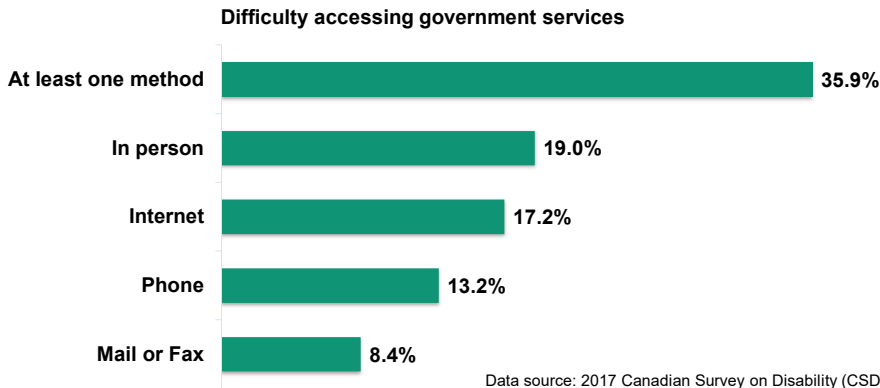
## It's about the person

What a client could or could not do last time is not what they can do this time. Approximately 60% of persons with disabilities have conditions that are changing over time (progressive, recurrent, fluctuating). Clients need to be able to decide how they want to access services, every time.

As a service provider, service design should not assume that a family member or personal care giver will perform tasks on behalf of someone living with a type of disability or functional limitations. Their personal information deserves privacy. Persons with disabilities are like everyone else, they have the right to access information and services themselves.

## Accessibility requires more than one service channel

One third of persons with disabilities have difficulties accessing at least one service channel.



# An accessible in-person experience

Consider these features:

## Service Design


- Parking is close to the building, ramps and elevators have hand railings, and doors have automatic openers
- Accessible transit services to building
- Accessible pathway from arrival point to accessible entrance.
- Area clear of obstacles, has textured ramps, tactile flooring, and Braille on door & wayfinding signs
- Colour contrast and luminance in environments (e.g., handrails on stairs or ramps should contrast from the background wall, door frames and door hardware)
- Fire alarm has visual cues
- Lowered doorknobs and wall-mounted controls (e.g. light switches)
- Adjustable counter height is available with a chair for client to sit comfortably before and during the interaction

## Assistive Technology

- Available on-screen keyboard with trackball, joysticks, or other pointing devices
- A signature card and accessible payment machine are available
- Wayfinding beacons, quick response (QR) codes for navigation assistance
- Telephones with large numbers and higher volume levels
- Audible notification via queuing system
- Visual announcement (Digital Displays) present information sign languages
- Desktop counter loop to enhance voice through client hearing aids
- Immediate access to sign language through Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)

## Training & Culture

- Trained greeter (concierge) welcomes client, identifies needs and for example, escort client to a priority area and offers to use a private room should the noise be too much of a distraction
- Agent does not touch or address service animal
- Agent knows to use plain language and speaks to client in short sentences, with confident, reassurance, and listens carefully
- Agent gives extra time for client to explain the situation and ensures the service request is clearly understood
- Agent faces client and speaks directly to client at all times
- Agent speaks directly to client, even if they brought someone to interpret or assist



**11%** of Canadians with a disability prefer in-person visits. \*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

# An accessible phone experience

Consider these features:

## Service Design

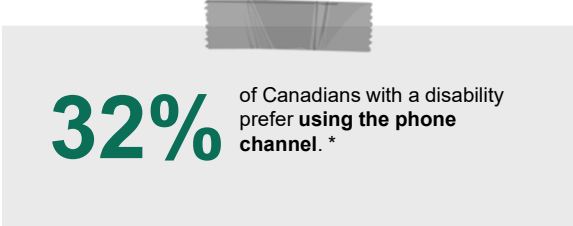
- IVR option to press “0” to skip the option tree and reach an live person
- Agent is able to complete tasks for the client, such as helping client to fill out the form and sends it by mail or email, ready to sign, at the conclusion of the call
- Agent able to send relevant information by email, or appropriate format, for client’s future reference
- Agents are equipped and located to minimize background noises.

## Assistive Technology

- TTY (Teletypewriter) phone number answered with same frequency and service standards as all other calls
- Accept calls made via Video Relay Service and Relay Services (via TTY).
- Service agents are aware of the range of interpreters they may interact with the alignment with privacy and third party representatives policies.

## Training & Culture

- Agent knows to use plain language and speaks to client in short sentences
- Agent is trained to ask simple questions without client feeling overwhelmed
- Agent is trained to ask simple questions without client feeling “corrected” if details are forgotten or mixed up and ensure any quirks, odd behaviour or escalated behaviour are handled appropriately and with the utmost sensitivity
- Agent is trained to recognize behaviors related to a disability (e.g. slurred speech does not mean a client is intoxicated)



**32%** of Canadians with a disability prefer **using the phone channel.** \*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

## An accessible online experience

Consider these features:

### Service Design


- All government websites are required to meet international standards for accessibility. The GC Standard is WCAG 2.0 and the 2.1 standard has been introduced to include improvements for mobile devices.
- Nothing on the website flashes rapidly, links and drop-down menu have self-explanatory titles, plain language text is used, and icons are highly visible
- Embedded hyperlinks in a string of text rather than using the URL as the link text.
- Embedded videos available in ASL/LSQ sign language and have high-quality foreground audio that blocks background noise
- Supplement text with images, graphs, and other illustrations
- Personalized Chat greeter helps client find the information very quickly
- Live Chat Agent helps client fill out a form or answer any specific questions and can authorize digital signature
- Industry standards, such as WCAG, are the minimum requirements and doesn't ensure that 100% of persons with disabilities will be able to use it. Being inclusive means going beyond the minimum standards.
- Web accessibility includes plain language and both WCAG and GC policy seeks text at the grade 6-8 level of literacy. There are tools that measure the complexity of text.

### Assistive Technology

- Live Chat Agent is authorized to help client fill out application form using a screen reader that communicates onto client's computer speakers (JAWS)
- Artificial Intelligence such as voice-based technology and Chatbots is offered to answer real-time frequently asked questions
- Offer touch and adjustable screens with "read to me" options
- Web search engines optimization

### Training & Culture

- Agent is trained to ask simple questions without client feeling judged or criticized
- Agent knows to use plain language and speaks to the client in short sentences
- Designing accessible services is recognized as a distinct skill and lessons from previous services are carried forward as the starting point for the next.



**35%** of Canadians with a disability prefer **using the online channel**.\*

\* Data source: 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

Don't force clients that are using screen readers to listen to long text such as privacy statements when other clients can scroll past it.



## Respond to client needs during a Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has significantly changed the world we live in. It has also presented substantial challenges for persons with disabilities in the way they access services. **During these times, the Government must ensure that Canadians with disabilities maintain their health, safety and dignity.**

### Recognize barriers

#### In-Person

- Plexiglas partitions present communications barriers for clients and staff, particularly those with hearing impairments or those using a wheelchair.
- The increased use of tensile posts or stanchions may also present a barrier for clients with sight loss if these stanchions are not cane detectable, and may be a tripping hazard if not properly affixed.
- “Stand here” markers are challenging for clients with visual impairments and guide dogs have not been trained to social distance.
- A range of disability types result in more touching of the built environment (e.g., sight, balance, mobility), regular cleaning is crucial to protect their health.
- Enhanced cleaning procedures may cause health issues for those with chemical sensitivities.

#### Phone

- Closures or reduced hours in in-person offices may prevent some clients for receiving the services they need if they are forced to another channel.

#### Online

- Build in accessibility from the start when developing new services online to reach as many clients as possible.
- Include content in ASL/LSQ videos when possible.

### Create positive outcomes

#### Service Design

- Provide services in multiple channels.
- Consider designating specific times for priority service hours.
- If queues form outside your service centre, ensure the line is supervised and provide easy to wipe seating or queue place holders for those who cannot stand for long periods of time.
- Many persons rely on facial expressions and lip reading to understand communications. Masks can create a barrier for these individuals.
- Provide appointments for clients who have specific accessibility requirements.
- Allow representatives to act on behalf of the client.

#### Assistive Technology

- Provide video remote interpreting services for clients who communicate via sign languages
- Provide counterloops to assist those who use hearing aids

#### Training & Culture

- Ensure staff is aware that not everyone can follow social-distancing norms. If staff are required to assist, provide PPE to do so safely.
- Communicate changes to your environment to ensure your clients know what to expect.

### Tips

- Understand the barriers and consider people’s needs from the beginning.
- Be flexible.
- Keep documents and messages simple and easy to understand.
- Ensure new signage is at universal eye-level.
- Welcome feedback to adjust your new way of working quickly and effectively.



# Play 5

**Make communications accessible  
for everyone**

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# Use plain language

To communicate in plain language doesn't mean over-simplifying or leaving out critical information. When you use plain language, it actually makes critical information accessible and understandable for everyone.

When you write and speak plainly and simply, you:

- increase the chances that people will find, read and understand your information from any device
- make your information more accessible to persons with disabilities
- allow people who are reading your information on a small screen to see essential information first
- save resources when editing and translating your text
- improve task completion and cut costs by, for example, reducing enquiries

When communicating with clients, communications products and activities must be accurate, organized and accessible. Be simple, clear and concise with your key messages, services and storyline. Use language that is easy to read and understand, and include common language, images and similar references across all products and channels.

Always check the reading level of your text. Readability tools help you check if content is too wordy or complex. When content is at a reading level above grade 8, it can become difficult for many people to understand or complete their task.

Is your Web really accessible? Progress is being made on the technical aspects of accessible web standards but plain language is an often overlooked part of that standard.

## Choose the right words and sentences


- Choose simple and common words
- Use verbs instead of nouns formed from verbs
- Avoid jargon, idioms and expressions
- Use simple sentences
- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Limit each paragraph to one idea and keep it short

## Inform the right way


- Minimize the amount of information clients must process all at once
- Use headings, lists, and tables to make reading easier
- Use direct statement
- Use active voice and positive form
- Explain references to legislation

### Do

use simple sentences and bullets




write in plain language





### Don't

create long walls of text



use figures of speech and idioms





## Provide printed information the right way

### Layout

Display your content (format and positioning) in a logical order for the reader to quickly know where to start and how to follow the information. Separate your text in columns and use 1.5 line spacing. Try not to overload your page.

### Colour and contrast

Choose the right balance between your font colour and your background. Try light colours on dark backgrounds or the opposite. Use the same colour palette to choose colours that complement each other. Use a maximum of 3 colours per page. Avoid bright colours in text or images.

### Font style and size

Choose something easy for the eye to recognize the outline and shape of each letter. Use a sans-serif font such as Arial, Helvetica or Verdana. Create titles using a 48 points size. Format your text using a 14 or 16 point font size.

### Type of format

Choose paper or printing material with a matte or uncoated finish to minimize glare.



### Signage

#### Wayfinding systems

Space out all directional signs. Be selective in the amount of information you display. Use common terminology and keep all information up to date (especially in the case of relocation).

#### Wall-mounted signs

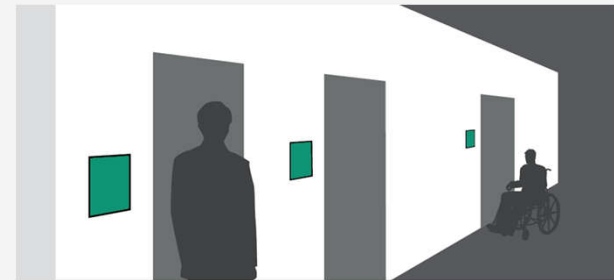
Use numbers and letters to identify rooms. Install anywhere from 1.2 to 1.5 meters above the finish floor. Apply the same height where possible.

#### Technology-based

Use audio wayfinding to provide additional support. Create multilingual content. Explore and test new technologies, from text-to-speech software to location-based mobile applications.

#### Type of format

Choose a matte or non-glare finish for your background or letter surfaces. Use tactile lettering and Braille for all permanent room signs. Use both uppercase and lowercase for tactile and non-tactile messaging. Use large bold print with square lettering such as Arial for pictorial signage.



# Provide online information the right way

## Navigation

Choose a structure that allows all options to adapt to any platform or device such as desktop computers, tablets and mobiles. Use headings to allow screen readers to detect the reading order.

## Images

Add “alt text” to describe a picture, photo, graph or table. Try not to overlap a text over an image or busy background.

## Audio and video files

Use transcripts and captions with alternative text-based format to describe any content. Include sub-titles and format your text using a 20 points size. Use a white font on a black background.

## Content development

Apply the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 principles](#). Make sure your design is supported by several browsers, devices and assistive technologies.

### Tip

Avoid the use of too many capital letters, italics or underlines. This may be difficult to read. It may even change the original tone and meaning of your message.



Do

follow a linear, logical layout

describe images and provide transcripts for video

build for keyboard use only

make large clickable actions

Don't

spread content all over a page

only show information in an image or video

force mouse or screen use

demand precision

# Play 6

**Develop the skills to provide accessible service**

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## Approach clients the right way

### Attitude

Have patience and be accommodating. For example, recognize there may be a need to repeat information.

Make clients feel welcome and confident to have an open expression of opinions without fear of being judged or dismissed. Encourage persons with disabilities to speak for themselves. Listen actively and engage in dialogue.

- Ask before you help. Don't assume the person needs help.
- Don't make assumptions about the type of disability a person has or about what accommodation needs they may have.
- Some disabilities are not visible and clients are not required to tell you about their disabilities.
- Speak directly to your client, not to their support person or companion.
- Take the time to get to know your client's needs and focus on meeting those needs just as you would with any other client.
- Listen carefully. If you're not sure what your client is saying, confirm by summarizing or repeating what was said to you, or politely ask them to repeat it.
- Be patient. People with some type of disabilities may take a little longer to respond or do things.
- Use appropriate language and terminology when referring to persons with disabilities.

### Tips

- **Instead of:** blind (the), visually impaired (the)  
**Use:** Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment
- **Instead of:** Hard of hearing (the), deaf-mute, hearing impaired  
**Use:** Person who is hard of hearing, person who is deaf
- **Instead of:** Handicapped (the)  
**Use:** Person with a disability
- **Instead of:** Handicapped parking, bathrooms  
**Use:** Accessible parking, accessible bathrooms

If you're not sure what to do, ask your client, "How may I help you?" Your client knows if they need help and how you can provide it.



## Respond to the unique needs of persons with disabilities

### How to interact with someone who is accompanied by a support person

- Permit support persons on premises
- Allow support person, if requested by the client, to attend in-person visits or calls
- Request permission from client to discuss confidential account information in front of support person
- Know that support persons help persons with disabilities maintain their independence.
- Look and speak directly to the client even though the client is communicating through the support person.

### How to interact with Teletypewriter and VRS users

- Speak directly to the client or TTY user, not to the Relay operator or video interpreter.
- Talk a bit more slowly than usual as the relay operator is typing in or the video interpreter is signing what you are saying.
- Spell names.
- For TTY interactions, always say "Go Ahead" when you are finished.
- For TTY interactions, always wait for the relay operator to say "Go Ahead" before speaking.

All employees should have general awareness and sensitivity training. For example, ESDC requires employees to take "The Richness of our Differences" course to provide role-specific training to front-line service agents.



### Mandatory training ideas

- What is the [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- About the most common types of disabilities
- Tips on how to interact with persons with disabilities
- Tips on how to interact with people who use an assistive device
- Tips on how to interact with people who require the assistance of a support person
- Information on how to use any equipment or devices available to support the client (e.g. screen readers, Video remote interpretation, TTY phone lines)
- **Reading and sharing this playbook!**

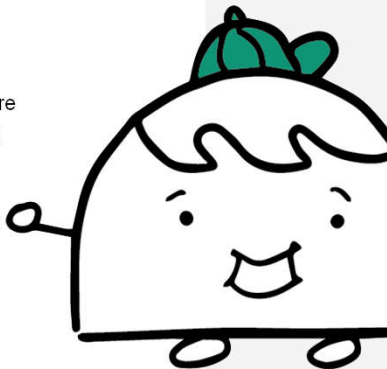
# Interact respectfully with someone who uses a service animal

A service animal is any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to assist a person with a disability. Each animal is trained to perform various tasks and provide a range of services.

A service animal is not a pet. It should be treated like an extension of their owner's arm. The rules and licensing for service animals are different for each province, many do not issue permits or regulate the training of animals.

## Best practices with someone who uses a service animal

- Do not request that the owner leaves the animal in different location, such as outside of your office or classroom.
- Avoid petting or talking to a service animal: this distracts the animal from its tasks.
- Do not feed or offer treats to the animal.
- Avoid deliberately startling the animal.
- Remember not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses. If you are not sure and it is necessary that you verify, it is okay to ask the owner if it is a service animal.
- Remember that the owner is responsible for maintaining control over the animal at all time. You are not responsible for cleaning up after it or feeding it. You may provide water if the owner requests it.



Dogs are by far the most common type of animal used to assist people with visual impairments. However, many different types of animals can be used and assist other types of disabilities.

**A guide dog** serves as a travel aid for a person with vision loss.

**A hearing or signal animal** alerts a person with hearing loss when a sound occurs, such as knock on the door or alarm.

**Mobility assistance animals** may carry, fetch, open doors, ring doorbells, activate elevator buttons, pull a wheelchair, steady a person while walking or help someone get up after a fall.

**A seizure response animal** warns a person of an impending seizure or provides aid during a seizure such as going for help or standing guard over the person.

**Therapeutic assistance animals** aid people with cognitive or psychological disabilities by bringing a phone to the person in emergency, turning on the lights, fetching medication, barking for help in emergency or assisting a person with panic disorder coping in crowds.

# Play 7

Be part of an accessible culture

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# Make accessibility possible!

## I am an employee

**Be an ally.**  
When you witness policies or practices that go against accessibility principles, don't be afraid to raise the issues or question the status quo. Don't be afraid to suggest new ways of doing things.

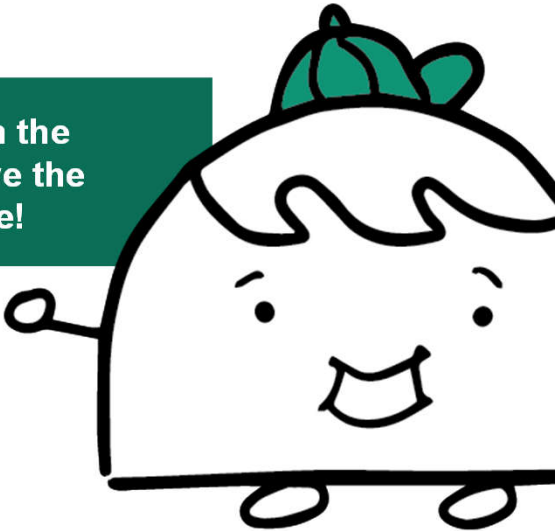
## I am a Team Leader or Manager

**Be an agent of change.**  
Promote accessibility awareness and consider inviting guest speakers to your next town hall or staff meeting to discuss accessibility in practice. Consider including accessibility awareness activities or training within annual performance agreements. Recognize that your staff may need additional time to provide an accessible client service experience.

## I am an Executive

**Lead by example.**  
Put accessibility at the forefront of your decisions. If endorsing a new program or service, make sure that all design decisions have considered accessibility in all its facets. Your role is to foster a culture of accessibility. As you repeat messaging about efficiency, performance targets and standardized procedures, are you telling employees how accessibility fits into these priorities?

No matter your role in the organization, you have the power to drive change!



# Foster an accessibility-supportive culture

## Culture is a thing

Culture is reflected in the attitudes and behaviours within the organization and determines what is encouraged or discouraged. Employees face implicit expectations that will affect the decisions they make each day as part of their work. This can be seen in many aspects of your day-to-day activities. For example, the priority you place on ensuring systems are accessible, how you allocate resources and investments and the way persons with disabilities are treated each day is a reflection of your culture.

## Why culture matters for service delivery

There is a saying that “culture eats strategy for breakfast”... will your strategy to improve the accessibility of client services survive the ingrained attitudes and behaviours of your organization?

Organizations cannot develop procedures for every possibility, at some point client service staff will need to adapt. How they adapt will be guided by the organization’s culture. Over time culture will counter the best intentions as it is encompassed in the beliefs and behaviours of employees.

Legacy policies and procedures can create hurdles for staff wanting to ensure a person with a disability can access a service of benefit. An organization’s policies indicate expectations that can re-enforce an outdated culture. A renewed focus on accessibility needs to be holistic.

## Repeated messaging...

- Shapes people's attitudes and behaviors
- Brings together a way of thinking and doing
- Defines what is encouraged and accepted
- Resonates better when shared often

## Questions to consider

- Is accessibility considered from the start when developing a new program or service?
- Is compliance to accessibility standards part of your department's go/no go decision for launching new systems or services?
- Do all staff receive training to improve their understanding of accessibility issues?
- Do employees talk about accessibility just because it is important?
- Is accessibility included in your planning, even when budgets are limited?



# Take steps to move your culture towards accessibility

## Express your values

Values are statements about how we would like staff to think and behave. They reflect what we want our organization to be. When values and culture align, it is a powerful force moving the organization forward.

- The [Government of Canada's Values and Ethics Code](#) explicitly identifies Respect for People as a Value of the Public Service.
- Persons with disabilities are explicitly included in the [Canadians Human Rights Act](#).
- The [Accessible Canada Act](#) establishes principles that apply to federal organizations.

Accessibility is part of your values; how do you express your values to highlight the importance of accessibility?

## Embed accessibility in governance

Service delivery infrastructure is often the result of many separate projects implemented over time and continues to evolve into the future. Hence, accessibility isn't a one time question and ensuring services remain accessible can benefit from governance processes.

- Is there a clear understanding of the accessibility standards for the organization? Do exceptions require an explicit decision?
- Is accessibility a mandatory requirement for investment approval and implementation?
- Is there explicit tracking and reporting on progress towards accessibility?
- Is it clear who is accountable for accessibility?

## Awareness and understanding

Society's understanding of accessibility has evolved significantly and most people don't have the opportunity to see it in its entirety through personal experience. Awareness and understanding is a key element of changing culture.

While specialists will need specific training to inform their work (e.g., service specialist, web designer, etc.), it is the raising of the collective understanding and awareness that changes culture. Training, information, regular discussions can all work to develop awareness of the barriers that exist for persons with disabilities.

### Respect for People

Treating all people with respect, dignity and fairness is fundamental to creating relationship with the Canadian public and contributes to a safe and healthy work environment that promotes engagement, openness and transparency.

— Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector

### Excellence in the workplace

Excellence in the design and delivery of public sector policy, programs and services is beneficial to every aspect of Canadian public life. Engagement, collaboration, effective teamwork and professional development are all essential to a high-performing organization.

— Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector

“

“Even as people with disabilities lead the way forward, many still face discrimination, exclusion, and barriers. Today, we recommit ourselves to building a more inclusive country – and world – based on equality and respect for everyone’s human rights.

- Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, 2019

”

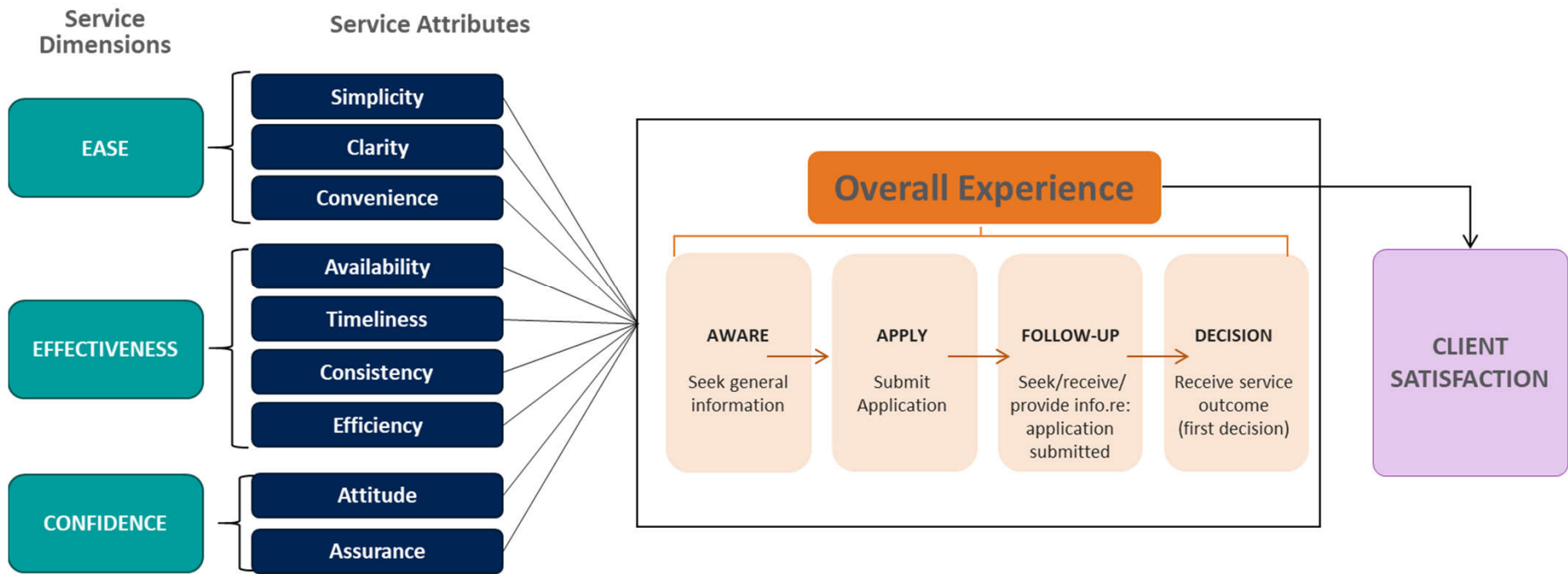
# Inspiring tools

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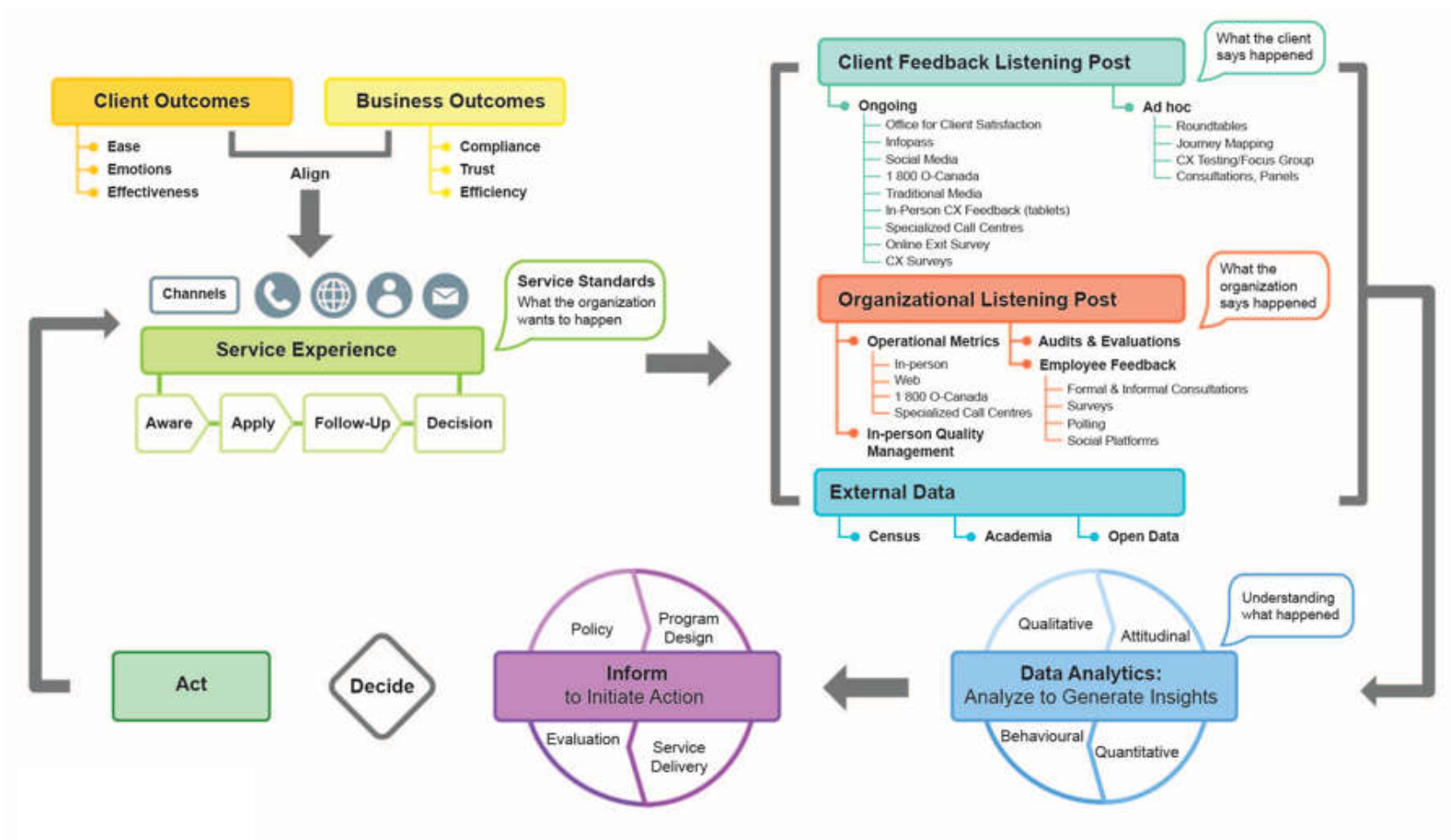
Discover templates, checklists and  
great sources of information

# Client Experience (CX) Survey Measurement Model

Service Canada developed the survey model below as a consistent framework for assessing the service experience of its clients. The methodology for the Client Experience Survey was initially implemented in 2017-18 and allows to assess the tracking of each stage of the client journey. The Model was drawn from a combination of existing models to suit Service Canada context, and validated through consultation with internal stakeholders. The existing models include: The Common Measurements Tool (CMT), owned and licensed by the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS), the client survey model used by the Government of Quebec, and Forrester's approach to client experience measurement.



# Business Intelligence Model



# Accessible Client Service: Current State Client Journey Map Template



Client's first name

## Persona

- Age
- Type of disability
- Client need / purpose for accessing our services

## Disability symptoms

- Medical condition preventing the client to easily access our services

## Client's reality

- Client's functional limitations and emotional behaviours when using client interaction channels (Online, Phone, In-person, etc.)

## JOURNEY PHASES

## CLIENT ACTIONS (DOING)

Aware	Inform	Advise	Identify	Apply	Manage
Knowledge of the information (what triggered the service need)	Choice of channel for the initial point of contact	Key details of the service request and information available for support	Action followed by the information gathering	Steps to complete the service goal	Service value and next steps

## CLIENT INTERACTIONS

Identify client service channel used or preferred (Online, Phone, In-person, etc.)

## SERVICE BARRIERS

	What prevents the client from having immediate access	What prevents the client from understanding the information	What prevents the client from providing the right level of information	What prevents the client to go through a business process	What prevents the client from tracking and following up
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## CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Identify client satisfaction (emotions/feelings)



# Accessible Client Service: **Future State** Client Journey Map Template



Client's first name

**Persona**

- Age
- Type of disability
- Client need / purpose for accessing our services

**Disability symptoms**

- Medical condition preventing the client to easily access our services

**CHANNELS**

Online

By Telephone

In-Person Visits

**CLIENT'S  
REALITY**

Client's functional limitations and emotional behaviours when using client interaction channels.

**SERVICE  
IMPROVEMENTS**

Assistive technology, policy & service design, and employee training that can reduce or eliminate the barriers within each respective channel.

**CLIENT  
EXPERIENCE**

Client's perspective describing the service experience

## Mark your progress without leaving anyone behind

Based on the number of questions you answer “Yes”, this will generate a list of existing practices that are making your program or service more accessible to your clients. Based on the number of questions you answer “No”, this will generate a list of considerations for new projects or initiatives that aim to improve accessibility of your client service.

### In-person client service experience

#### Physical environment

Is your service centre or office located in a space that...	Yes	No
Follows all applicable building codes:		
• International Organization for Standardization (ISO)		
• building code of 2010		
• National Building Code	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Provincial Building Code		
• Municipal by-laws		
• And other interior design standards as appropriate		
Has been assessed against the most recent accessibility standards and building codes (as of 2019)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has parking close to the building and is accessible by public transit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is accessible by public transit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Includes a daily accessibility assessment of your service area (i.e., take notice of building or city renovations that are underway, test functionality of door openers, ensure that no object is obstructing, or snow has been cleared from cross-walks)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ensures the installation of door handles, wall-mounted controls, and signage is at the appropriate height and reach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has accessible washrooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In case of an emergency while clients visit your facility, do you...	Yes	No
Have clearly marked exit signs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have audio alarm systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have visual alarm systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide a dedicated refuge area for those who may need assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assist clients in the event of an emergency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Service waiting area

To limit physical hazards or obstacles, do you...	Yes	No
Have doors with high contrast glass panels to ensure visibility of persons coming through	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have paths of travel that are designed for clients to be accompanied by someone or by a service animal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have cane detectable features to make potential hazards noticeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To make people feel at ease, safe and secure, do you...	Yes	No
Have a combination of chairs with and without arms available at all times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have high contrast visual queuing (e.g. black letters on a white screen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make private rooms available for immediate access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have multi-level service counters to accommodate wheelchairs or utilize as a supported piece of equipment for someone with physical limitations (e.g. increase ability to stand)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide sufficient task lighting to increase clarity and decrease visual fatigue for someone who has low vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Client service transaction

In order to adjust your service delivery in respect to someone's personal circumstances, do you...	Yes	No
Offer private rooms to be booked in advance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have counter loops available for someone who is hard of hearing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offer on demand (i.e., in-person or video relay) sign language interpretation in ASL, LSQ, and ISL for someone who is deaf or hard of hearing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have talk-thru microphones to ease verbal communication through Plexiglas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Where computer workstations are made available for clients to use, do you...	Yes	No
Have Screen Readers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow for zoom capabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offer touch and adjustable computer screens with "read to me" options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have compatible software to support personal assistive devices (i.e., use of pointers/joystick instead of a computer mouse)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Phone client service experience

For individuals to request special assistance, do you...	Yes	No
Have live Text Telephone (TTY) capabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have capabilities for automated call-backs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a call tree option to "Press 0" for immediate assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offer Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) that enables to move quickly through the queuing process, tailoring available options for client support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Online client service experience

### For individuals with a disability or functional limitations that prefer using the Web channel, does your website...

Yes No

Comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and meet the AA standard, for example:

- Alternative text or alt-text for pictures
- Audio and video do not play automatically
- Visuals do not flash more than 3 times a second
- Site can zoom up to 200%
- No keyboard traps
- Hover or focus does not disrupt use

☐ ☐

Draft all web content in plain and simple language

☐ ☐

Allow for compatibility with client assistive devices used at home (e.g. screen readers, communication devices or software)

☐ ☐

Have adjustable features such as zoom capabilities to accommodate users with low vision

☐ ☐

Support media players that display captions and provide audio options with adjustable size and colour for someone that is deaf or has low vision

☐ ☐

Have videos with subtitles and captions, or written transcripts

☐ ☐

Offer live chat option with video capabilities (e.g. personal greeter or a service agent operating in a secure environment)

☐ ☐

Have icons or an image + words (not words only) so that it is quickly and easily detectable

☐ ☐

### For someone who needs more time to process or remember information, do your online application forms...

Yes No

Enable autofill responses to avoid retyping the same information

☐ ☐

Have no time limits to allow for breaks, a longer pause, or recovery at a later date (e.g. save for later option)

☐ ☐

Have a progress bar to make it easy for clients to follow each step and understand where they are in the process

☐ ☐



## Feedback and engagement

To include person with disabilities in the development of programs or services, do you...	Yes	No
Offer ways for clients to provide feedback, complaints, and suggestions across all of your channels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with advocacy groups (e.g. partners and stakeholders) to increase feedback and consultations with persons with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Co-design and conduct user experience testing directly with persons who have a disability or functional limitations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maximize sources of client input, including collecting social media posts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a process to assess and address client feedback/input	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use client input to proactively propose and implement new or improved solutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Policy design

Where service agents are required to fully assist clients, do they have the ability to...	Yes	No
Take as much time as needed to properly address outstanding client concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fill out forms and apply on behalf of the client	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authorize a delegated legal third party representative to sign, provide, or receive personal information on behalf of the client (e.g. apply or cancel benefits)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Communications

For information to be published and available to the public, do you...	Yes	No
Offer services through multiple channels, creating more options and better reach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Draft all documents in an 8th grade reading level or below so all publications, reports, promotional and educational materials are easier to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use inclusive images and language that focus on ability rather than disability to convey messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make information available in various accessible formats, using clear and concise language (e.g., braille, audio and video format, large print, high quality print, etc...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engage key stakeholder organizations in outreach and distribution strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Publicly post clear explanations about accessibility features	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For clients to easily find their way to your in-person service, do you...	Yes	No
Provide signage at every point of access and in alternative formats (i.e. the use of wayfinder beacons, content in braille or large print) to reduce anxiety and confusion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Install signage at a universal eye level so that people of all heights (including wheelchair users) can read it easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

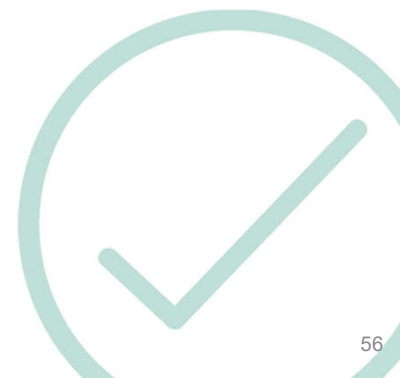


## Training

To better support client needs, are service agents trained to proactively...	Yes	No
Use clear and simple language when communicating verbally or in writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize possible delay when someone is using a Video Relay Service (VRS) call that involves either an ASL or LSQ video interpreter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Request one piece of information at a time and ask for clarification if needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize client fatigue and offer breaks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take steps to reduce background noise (e.g. ask visitors to turn down loud headphones, softer typing on keyboard or avoid moving papers when on the phone)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and communicate other related programs and services that can be beneficial to the client	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Culture

To foster an accessibility-focused culture, do you...	Yes	No
Use accessibility criteria for project funding and prioritization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consult existing data sources that can be used to make informed decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Examine and implement international best practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Include mandatory training courses for all employees that goes beyond sensitivity, in all performance agreements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide dedicated client service training to all front-line staff and ensure maximum flexibility and efficiency to attain highest level of first contact resolution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





## Sources and references

Here is a list of reference material that was used to develop this playbook.

### Creative content

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- Making an accessible Canada for persons with disabilities, Canada.ca, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-people-disabilities.html>
- Accessibility in the public service, Canada.ca, <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/accessibility-public-service.html>
- Inclusive Design, <https://www.microsoft.com/design/inclusive/>
- The Benefit of Designing for Everyone, Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Australia, <http://www.centreforinclusivedesign.org/media/1185/inclusive-design-infographic-report-digital-160519.pdf>
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- Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility, Gov.UK, <https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/>
- Universal Design Network of Canada (UDNC), <https://universaldesign.ca/>
- Accessible Customer Service at RBC, <https://www.rbc.com/accessibility/accessible-customer-service.html>
- Best practices for Serving Customers with Invisible Disabilities, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, <https://aoda.ca/best-practices-for-serving-customers-with-invisible-disabilities/>
- Accessible Customer Service, Township of Essa, <https://www.essatownship.on.ca/Shared%20Documents/Municipal%20Office/Accessible%20Customer%20Service-Best%20Practice%20Tips%20and%20Procedures.pdf>
- A Way with Words and Images, Canada.ca, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/words-images.html>
- Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings, Canada.ca, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/inclusive-meetings.html>
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

### Playbooks and guides

- GCworkplace Transformation Playbook, Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Canada, <http://www.gcpeia.gc.ca/wiki/GCworkplace>
- ACCESSABILITY : A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design, [https://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD\\_AccessAbility\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf)
- CDS Accessibility Handbook, Canadian Digital Service, <https://digital.canada.ca/a11y/>
- Executive Guide to Federal IT Accessibility, U.S. General Services Administration, <https://www.section508.gov/tools/playbooks/exec-guide-accessibility>

- Disability Inclusion Planning – A guide for local Government Australian Local Government Association, <https://alga.asn.au/disability-inclusion-planning-guide-for-local-government/>
- Guide pratique : Offrir un service à la clientèle adapté aux besoins de la personne handicapée, Le Phénix, <http://lephenix.ca/ressources/publications-du-phenix/guide-pratique-services-a-la-clientele/> (French only)

### Articles and blogs

- Get Accessibility Right: Recruit people with disabilities into the design process, Forrester article published on March 6, 2020, <https://www.forrester.com/report/Get+Accessibility+Right+Recruit+People+With+Disabilities+Into+The+Design+Process/-/E-RES158356>
- Accessibility 101, US DigialGov article published on December 4, 2019, <https://digital.gov/resources/introduction-accessibility/>
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- The bias barriers: Allyships, Inclusion, and everyday behaviors, 2019 State of Inclusion Survey conducted by Deloitte, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-inclusion-survey-research-the-bias-barrier.pdf>
- Client Experience Survey 2019-20, Service Canada, For more information on this report : please contact nc-por-rop-gd@hrsdcrrhdc.gc.ca

