

# Accessible Procurement

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Public Services and Procurement Canada

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# What is accessibility?

- **Accessibility:** the combination of aspects that influence a person's ability to function within an environment.
- **Disability:** any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.
- **Barrier:** includes anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice, that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.
- According to [Statistics Canada's 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability](#), more than **6 million** Canadians aged 15 and over (22% of the population) identify as having a disability.

# Understanding barriers to accessibility

Understanding the barriers people may experience means that we can include accessibility requirements in our procurements that reduce or remove these barriers.

Different types of barriers and examples include:

- **Attitudinal barriers** – when we assume that a person does not have a disability because it is not visible
- **Organizational or systemic barriers** – eligibility criteria that can exclude people
- **Architectural or physical barriers** – a building that can only be accessed by stairs
- **Information or communication barriers** – a virtual meeting does not have live captioning or a document that uses small print or a font that is difficult to read.
- **Technological barriers** – a website does not support screen-reading software
- **Environmental or sensory barriers** – scented soap in a bathroom or very bright lights in the workplace or public space

# Why accessibility matters

- Accessibility in Canada is about creating communities, workplaces and services that enable everyone to participate fully in society without barriers.
- [Employment and Social Development Canada's 2019 Survey on Accessibility](#) found that for employment-related barriers for persons with disabilities:
  - 25% of respondents indicated always or often experiencing a barrier to finding meaningful work
  - 24% of respondents witnessed a barrier to having access to supports or workplace accommodations
  - 23% respondents witnessed a barrier to moving up in an organization
  - 21% respondents witnessed a barrier to being hired
- [Public Service Commission of Canada](#) initiative with goal of hiring 5,000 persons with disabilities by 2025.

# Governing legislation and procurement

The Government of Canada envisions a public service that is a world leader in barrier-free, inclusive workplaces **and services**.

- The [Accessible Canada Act](#) came into force on July 11, 2019, and requires organizations under federal jurisdiction to identify, remove and prevent barriers in seven key areas, including in the **procurement of goods, services, and construction**.
- The Treasury Board [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#) requires departments to:
  - **consider accessibility** in procurement and **provide a justification** when accessibility requirements are not included.



# What is accessible procurement?

Accessibility in procurement is about:

- Ensuring that the **goods and services** we buy are **accessible to a broad range of end-users** by including accessibility criteria in requirements (when appropriate).
- Providing a **barrier-free procurement process** for the public via access to information and tendering opportunities.
- Enabling **diverse suppliers, including businesses owned or led by persons with disabilities**, to participate in procurement processes through initiatives such as social procurement and supplier outreach activities.

# Roles and responsibilities

Considering accessibility in a procurement is a shared responsibility.

## **Business owners (project authority) are responsible for:**

- considering accessibility in their procurements and determining whether accessibility applies by:
  - considering the needs of the end-user(s)
  - leveraging existing accessibility standards, where possible
- documenting a justification when, after considering accessibility, it is determined that it is not appropriate to include accessibility requirements as part of commodity specification or it is not possible to obtain goods or services that comply. The written explanation must be included in the procurement file ([Sample Justification](#)).

## **Contract authorities are responsible for:**

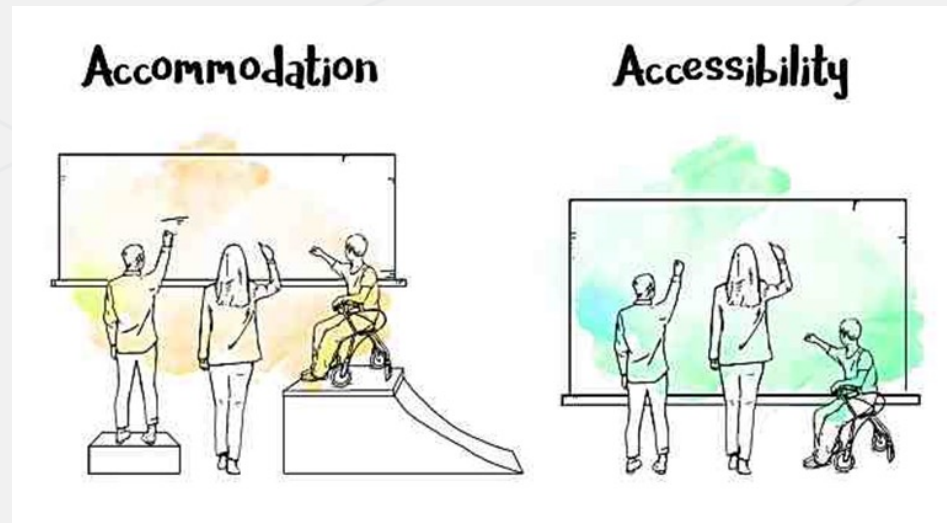
- ensuring that accessibility has been considered, and if appropriate that requirements are included in solicitations
- playing a challenge function if accessibility is not addressed
- ensuring that the business owner provides a written justification if it is determined that it is not appropriate to include accessibility requirements



# Considering accessibility – putting people first

Considering accessibility helps us to proactively reduce and remove barriers by putting people first when developing requirements.

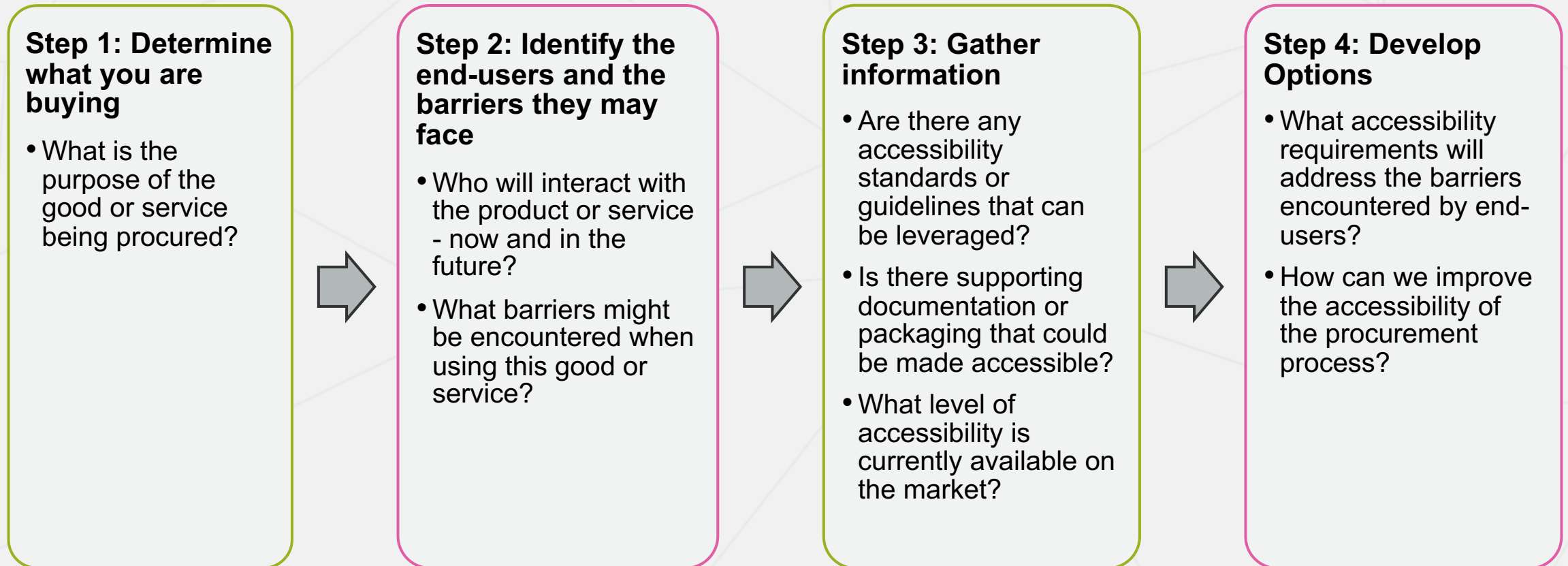
- **Accessibility:** Considering accessibility in procurement means identifying and removing barriers that end-users may experience when interacting with a good or service. It means procuring goods or services that are accessible by default and inclusive by design.
- **Accommodation:** Providing accommodation is an action taken in response to an individual's personal circumstances when they experience a barrier. It requires a change to make a good or service accessible after it is procured.





# How to consider accessibility in a procurement

There are steps to help integrate accessibility in procurement, regardless of what is being bought:



# Case study

A business owner requires the services of a supplier to conduct research and deliver a report on findings. This research could require several activities, including consulting with federal employees through workshops.

How can accessibility be considered in this procurement?

- **Step 1:** Determine what you are buying
  - If the supplier will host workshops, how will they be delivered (virtual, in-person, or both)?
- **Step 2:** Identify end-users and the barriers they may face
  - The end-users are federal employees across departments with a wide-range of needs.
  - A virtual platform for the workshop may be inaccessible for users of assistive technology.
- **Step 3:** Gather information
  - Are there standards, guidelines or best practices for delivering virtual consultations, or creating accessible materials?
- **Step 4:** Develop options
  - Require that all workshop materials, including communication products and presentations to be written in plain language and available in an accessible format.



# If accessibility does not apply

- The [Directive](#) states that a justification must be documented if:
  - it is determined that accessibility considerations are not consistent with modern treaties or trade agreements
  - if it is not appropriate to include accessibility as part of commodity specifications
  - if it is not possible to obtain goods, services or construction that have accessibility features
- If after considering accessibility it is determined that accessibility does not apply to the procurement, a written explanation **must** be provided and documented in the procurement file, which can be done using the [sample justification form](#).

# Helping to remove barriers in the process

Considering accessibility in the procurement process helps to reduce or remove barriers to participation. Business owners and contracting authorities are encouraged to:

- Use plain language and apply accessible document formatting techniques when creating solicitation documents and related materials for suppliers.
  - Helpful resources:
    - [How to create accessible documents in Office 365 - Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
    - [Translation Bureau's page of plain language writing resources](#)
    - [Communications Community Office's Plain Language and Accessibility Hub](#)
- Ensure that in-person or virtual activities such as industry days, site visits, bidders conferences, and even supplier debriefings, are designed to be inclusive and accessible.
  - Helpful resources:
    - [Planning Inclusive and Accessible Events \(in-person\)](#)
    - [Best practices for hosting accessible virtual meetings](#)

## Did you know?

**Users** who are unable to access information on the government electronic tendering service (GETS) may request to receive the information in an alternate format as per the Terms and Conditions of CanadaBuys.

# Accessible Procurement Resource Centre

- The Accessible Procurement Resource Centre (APRC) at Public Services and Procurement Canada was established in 2018 to support:
  - the procurement pillar of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) and related updates to the Treasury Board [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#)
  - federal departments and agencies in considering accessibility in the procurement requirements for goods and services
- APRC's key activities:
  - **interpret** accessibility policy and guidelines and **help integrate** them into the PSPC procurement process
  - **research and develop** tools and resources related to accessible procurement
  - **help procurement professionals** consider the needs and perspectives of end-users
  - **lead and support** a community of practice for accessible procurement

# Get involved - Agents of Change!

The APRC has established an interdepartmental community of Agents of Change for accessible procurement.

This community of practice seeks to:

- identify knowledge gaps to inform the development of guidance and resources
- equip procurement professionals to share knowledge and provide peer support
- provide timely on-the-ground intelligence, insights, and advice

For more information, please reach out to [TPSGC.PACRAAccessible-APAccessiblePRC.PWGSC@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca](mailto:TPSGC.PACRAAccessible-APAccessiblePRC.PWGSC@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca) or join our [Agents of Change GCcollab group](#)

# Where to go for guidance and support?

Visit the [APRC's internal web page](#) (available to PSPC employees) or the [Accessibility Hub](#) (Office of Public Service Accessibility and available to all client departments and agencies) for links to helpful resources.

For further guidance or to provide suggestions for new resources, please email the APRC [generic inbox](#).

