# CAN Accessibility Network logo in red

# Employment Lifecycle Accessibility Framework

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## Introduction

This framework is intended to be an easy-to-use tool for individuals and employers interested in inclusive, accessible employment. It allows users to assess organizational practices and promotes discussions within organizations.

## Employment Lifecycle Practices

Every organization can improve their accessibility practices. Aim for continuous progress and improvement throughout all stages of the employment lifecycle.

This section of the framework includes five assessment worksheets that you and/or a team can use to think about your organization’s practices.

We have designed the assessment worksheets so that you can print just the assessment pages and have an easy reference tool. You can work on sections one at a time or tackle together.

Practice Assessment Legend

When completing the worksheets, use the following codes to mark the status of each practice.

AD: for things you already do.

DB: for things you could do better.

LM: for things you would like to learn more about.

SD: for things you want to start doing.

About the Practices

The practices are presented alphabetically.

This is not an exhaustive list of practices. As the project team made decisions about what practices to include, the team focused on practices that would be suitable for small and medium-sized businesses.

### Attraction: This is the moment the public, including potential job applicants, first interacts with your brand.

Use the table below to assess how your organization could improve its accessibility practices. The left-hand column lists practices. The right-hand column provides you a place to identify which practices you: already do (AD), could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), or want to start doing (SD).

| **Practices** | **Status** |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** Centralize accessibility budget and operations. | [Insert status] |
| **2.** Consider opportunities like internships, practicums, or job-sampling specifically for people with disabilities. | [Insert status] |
| **3.** Co-create a recruitment plan with people with disabilities. Actively include them in your hiring process. | [Insert status] |
| **4.** Demonstrate a commitment to inclusion by using language that is inclusive. | [Insert status] |
| **5.** Host an open house for job seekers to learn about your organization and available jobs or participate in disability job fairs in your community. | [Insert status] |
| **6.** Learn about the social model of disability. | [Insert status] |
| **7.** Measure your organization's diversity. Does it represent the variety of people in Canada based on census and labour market information? | [Insert status] |
| **8.** Provide information in different formats. Whenever possible, offer information in various formats, like videos, written text, emails, spoken word, captions, and sign language. Include information about how to request information in different formats. | [Insert status] |
| **9.** Review your policies and procedures to make sure they are not preventing people with disabilities from joining. | [Insert status] |
| **10.** Track your progress by developing a way to monitor how well you are attracting candidates with disabilities and relevant experiences. | [Insert status] |
| **11.** Use different social media channels to share your values and show you value accessibility and inclusion. Use images that represent all kinds of people and backgrounds. | [Insert status] |
| **12.** Use plain language to make sure your information is easy to read and understand. | [Insert status] |

#### Attraction Action Plan

Use the table below to create a quick action plan for the practices you marked as could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), and want to start doing (SD). Identify the practice number, assign an action owner, and set a check in date in the relevant columns.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Practice number** | **Action owner** | **Check in by** |
| **Task 1:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 2:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 3:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |

|  |
| --- |
| **Notes** |
| [Insert notes here] |

### Recruitment: The steps a person goes through from applying for a job to becoming an employee.

Use the table below to assess how your organization could improve its accessibility practices. The left-hand column lists practices. The right-hand column provides you a place to identify which practices you: already do (AD), could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), or want to start doing (SD).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Practices** | **Status** |
| **1.** Assign a contact person for interviews who stays in touch with candidates throughout the process. Make sure interviews (virtual or in-person) are accessible. | [Insert status] |
| **2.** List only required skills in job posting. Separate “must-have” skills from “nice-to-have” ones. Is a driver’s license required for this position? | [Insert status] |
| **3.** Make the application process fair and accessible, reducing potential bias. For example, try anonymizing resumes during the review process. | [Insert status] |
| **4.** Offer accommodations proactively and make it easy for candidates to request them. Ensure these accommodations are offered consistently. | [Insert status] |
| **5.** Provide the pay range for the positions you are hiring for. | [Insert status] |
| **6.** Share your company’s commitment to accessibility and inclusion in the job posting. | [Insert status] |
| **7.** Specify the job type: on-site, hybrid, or remote. If the job is on-site, include details about accessibility to help candidates understand the space and any accommodations they might need. | [Insert status] |
| **8.** State in job posting that accommodations are available for the application and interview process. Share information about how to request accommodations. | [Insert status] |
| **9.** Train hiring managers to recognize unintentional biases such as affinity bias (preferring people similar to themselves). For example, valuing eye contact might unfairly benefit some candidates, even though it is not related to job performance. | [Insert status] |
| **10.** Use clear and inclusive language in job requirements, keeping descriptions simple and specific. | [Insert status] |
| **11.** Use practical interviews where candidates can show their skills by doing tasks relevant to the position. | [Insert status] |
| **12.** Work with local employment agencies to support recruiting efforts. | [Insert status] |

#### Recruitment Action Plan

Use the table below to create a quick action plan for the practices you marked as could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), and want to start doing (SD). Identify the practice number, assign an action owner, and set a check in date in the relevant columns.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Practice number** | **Action owner** | **Check in by** |
| **Task 1:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 2:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 3:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |

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| --- |
| **Notes** |
| [Insert notes here] |

### Onboarding: The process of helping new employees learn about the organization and their role.

Use the table below to assess how your organization could improve its accessibility practices. The left-hand column lists practices. The right-hand column provides you a place to identify which practices you: already do (AD), could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), or want to start doing (SD).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Practices** | **Status** |
| **1.** Assign an onboarding mentor, buddy, or sponsor (someone not directly supervising the new employee). Have the mentor reach out one week before the first day. | [Insert status] |
| **2.** Discuss accommodations before the first day and have them ready when the new employee starts. | [Insert status] |
| **3.** Extend training periods when assistive technology is being introduced, giving employees time to learn and adjust. | [Insert status] |
| **4.** Invite employee feedback on how materials help them succeed at work. | [Insert status] |
| **5.** Make assistive technology easy to understand and accessible for all employees. | [Insert status] |
| **6.** Offer information in multiple formats when possible. Examples include large-print materials, braille documents, and Word files with screen reader-friendly headings. | [Insert status] |
| **7.** Provide an office orientation that highlights accessibility features, such as elevators, quiet areas, scent-free zones, ways to adjust lighting and temperature, and gender-neutral washrooms. | [Insert status] |
| **8.** Schedule regular check-ins with supervisors to support new employees. | [Insert status] |
| **9.** Share information about employee resource groups (ERG). If you do not have ERGs, think about starting one or two. | [Insert status] |
| **10.** Use a consistent onboarding process with guides and checklists to keep things organized. | [Insert status] |

#### Onboarding Action Plan

Use the table below to create a quick action plan for the practices you marked as could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), and want to start doing (SD). Identify the practice number, assign an action owner, and set a check in date in the relevant columns.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Practice number** | **Action owner** | **Check in by** |
| **Task 1:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 2:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 3:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |

|  |
| --- |
| **Notes** |
| [Insert notes here] |

### Retention: The work of keeping employees content and motivated to stay with the organization.

Use the table below to assess how your organization could improve its accessibility practices. The left-hand column lists practices. The right-hand column provides you a place to identify which practices you: already do (AD), could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), or want to start doing (SD).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Practices** | **Status** |
| **1.** Actively promote and support inclusion and accessibility. | [Insert status] |
| **2.** Ensure benefits and pay structures are fair and transparent. | [Insert status] |
| **3.** Ensure processes are fair, consistent, and transparent. | [Insert status] |
| **4.** Follow good meeting practices: share agendas ahead of time, summarize notes and action items in writing, make information available in different formats, speak clearly, and ensure everyone has a chance to contribute. | [Insert status] |
| **5.** Include "inclusive leadership" as a measurable goal in leaders' annual performance review or key performance indicators (KPIs) | [Insert status] |
| **6.** Measure, monitor, and report on accessibility efforts. | [Insert status] |
| **7.** Offer mentoring and opportunities for professional development. | [Insert status] |
| **8.** Prioritize work-life balance by offering benefits like sick leave, flexible schedules, and hybrid work when possible. | [Insert status] |
| **9.** Provide ongoing, accessible, and flexible learning opportunities. | [Insert status] |
| **10.** Recognize differences in access to technology and digital skills among employees and provide training to close these gaps. | [Insert status] |
| **11.** Set clear goals to measure the success of retention and development efforts, aiming for continuous improvement. | [Insert status] |
| **12.** Support career growth for employees with disabilities with intentional planning, recognizing that careers span a long time. | [Insert status] |
| **13.** Use accessible platforms and highlight features like closed captions and adjustable font sizes. | [Insert status] |
| **14.** Use feedback from employees to improve learning, career development, and progression opportunities. | [Insert status] |

#### Retention Action Plan

Use the table below to create a quick action plan for the practices you marked as could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), and want to start doing (SD). Identify the practice number, assign an action owner, and set a check in date in the relevant columns.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Practice number** | **Action owner** | **Check in by** |
| **Task 1:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 2:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 3:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |

|  |
| --- |
| **Notes** |
| [Insert notes here] |

### Separation: The process of an employee leaving the organization.

Use the table below to assess how your organization could improve its accessibility practices. The left-hand column lists practices. The right-hand column provides you a place to identify which practices you: already do (AD), could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), or want to start doing (SD).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Practices** | **Status** |
| **1.** Encourage open, honest feedback during exit interviews (instead of using anonymous surveys). | [Insert status] |
| **2.** Find out why an employee wants to leave before they resign. Could adjustments help keep a great employee? | [Insert status] |
| **3.** Offer extended health benefits for a period after an employee leaves. | [Insert status] |
| **4.** Share any changes or improvements made based on exit interview feedback with the team to show a commitment to improvement. | [Insert status] |
| **5.** Stay connected with former employees through alumni networks or occasional check-ins, which can help with future rehiring or networking. | [Insert status] |
| **6.** Support employees who can no longer perform their job due to a disability by connecting them with local employment agencies or offering career transition programs. | [Insert status] |
| **7.** Use a structured process for exit interviews with standardized questions to ensure consistency and thoroughness. | [Insert status] |
| **8.** Use feedback from exit interviews to find areas for improvement. | [Insert status] |

#### Separation Action Plan

Use the table below to create a quick action plan for the practices you marked as could do better (DB), want to learn more about (LM), and want to start doing (SD). Identify the practice number, assign an action owner, and set a check in date in the relevant columns.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Practice number** | **Action owner** | **Check in by** |
| **Task 1:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 2:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |
| **Task 3:** | [Insert practice number] | [Insert action owner] | [Insert check in date] |

|  |
| --- |
| **Notes** |
| [Insert notes here] |

## Key Themes

This resource was created by a diverse project team made up of members from the Canadian Accessibility Network, Employment Community of Practice. The workplan included extensive community consultation. As the employment lifecycle accessibility framework developed, key themes emerged. Those key themes and two assessment questions are outlined in the section below.

1. Actions speak louder than words. What actions demonstrate a commitment to these themes?
2. Are we doing these things?

Involve people with disabilities throughout the process.

This approach is often called "Nothing about us without us." Engagement can happen one-on-one with managers, through employee resource groups, or by assigning someone in the organization to ensure accessibility is included in all operations. Compensate external advocates for their time.

Accessibility benefits everyone.

Plan for accessibility early, not as an afterthought. When something is designed to be inclusive from the start, it becomes accessible by default.

Listen to and trust your employees.

The person with the disability is the expert in what they need to be successful.

Make it easy to request adjustments and accommodations.

Use simple, low-barrier process for requesting adjustment and accommodations. Ensure all employees are familiar with the process.

Good communication makes things run smoothly.

Provide clear information and anticipate questions about what to expect. This helps reduce anxiety about change or new situations.

Hold leaders accountable.

Hire managers who have demonstrated inclusive behaviour and give them the tools and time they need to support a diverse team.

Aim for plain and inclusive language.

Language evolves so updating older content to reflect changes in language is a good practice. There are many tools available.

Learn about the social model of disability.

In the social model, disability is seen as one aspect of a person’s identity, much like race/ethnicity, gender, etc. From this perspective, disability is believed to result from a mismatch between the disabled person and the environment (both physical and social).

Be timely and flexible.

Make accessibility part of everyday operations. Do not wait for big declarations—

invest in people and time to make real progress. If needed, get help from experts to ensure you are on the right track.

Collaboration is essential to finding and implementing accommodations.

This may need to be a team effort involving a variety of internal and external stakeholders.

## Supportive Values

Supportive values for accessibility in the workplace are the core principles that support an inclusive, equitable and accommodating environment for all employees, including those with disabilities. These values represent a commitment to removing barriers so that everyone can fully participate and contribute. These values promote a culture where all individuals feel valued, supported and empowered to succeed.

1. How are you demonstrating these values in your workplace?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Accountability  Employers know their responsibility and take action to create inclusive workplaces. | Collaboration  Involve different perspectives to develop processes and practices that help all Canadians thrive at work. | Empathy  Be curious. Understand that not everyone’s experiences are the same as yours. |
| Professionalism  Act responsibly, be polite, and stay focused on business goals. | Respect  Treat others with mutual respect to keep things running smoothly. | Transparency  Trust grows when you are open and honest. |

## Definitions

Accessibility

Accessibility is the degree to which a product, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible regardless of ability. It often focuses on supporting people with disabilities but improving accessibility helps everyone.

Accommodation or Adjustment

Accommodation is the language of legislation. Workplace adjustments are changes to a job’s processes, procedures or work environment to help employees perform their jobs. Unless referring to legislation, the word “adjustment” could be used in place of “accommodation”. Everyone benefits from adjustments that help them do their best work. Things like flexible work schedules benefit lots of employees for lots of different reasons.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment (hi or low tech), software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

Disability Confident Employers

Disability confidence refers to knowledge and inclusion of people with disabilities. Disability confident organizations go above and beyond to create inclusive and accessible environments for all employees.

Employment Lifecycle

This describes the stages an employee goes through in a workplace, including attraction, recruitment, onboarding, retention, and separation. Each stage is important in the employee journey.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that promote a diverse, inclusive workplace. Employees with shared experiences or interests—like gender, ethnicity, or lifestyle—come together to support each other and the organization. Related groups include Business Resource Groups or networks for people with disabilities.

Inclusion

The practice of welcoming and supporting people who have been excluded in the past, such as due to race, gender, disability, or other factors.

Inclusive Employment

A workplace where everyone is respected, valued, and treated equitably. Inclusive workplaces reflect these values in their mission, policies, and how they interact with employees and customers.

Intersectionality

The idea that people can face different types of disadvantages at the same time, like how race, gender, and class can overlap to create unique challenges.

Neurodiversity

The idea that differences in how people think, and process information are part of natural human variation, and these differences should be accepted and respected.

Neurodivergent

A non-medical term used to describe people with thought patterns, feelings, or behaviours that differ from the majority of brains and includes Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other conditions.

Plain Language

A style of writing where the wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information.

Reasonable Accommodation

Changes to a job or work environment that give people with disabilities an equal chance to succeed at work.

Social Model of Disability

This model says that disability is caused by society not being accessible or inclusive, not by the person’s disability. It is barriers in the environment that create challenges, not the person’s abilities.

Universal Design

Designing spaces and products to be easy to use and understand for everyone, no matter their age, size, or ability.

## Resources

Because new resources are always being developed and links to resources stop working, Resources on specific topics are not linked to this framework.

National organizations with no cost resources to help employers become more disability confident are:

* [Canadian Accessibility Network](https://www.can-rca.ca/resources/)
* [Canadian Association for Supported Employment](https://www.supportedemployment.ca/)
* [Canadian Council for Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)](https://ccrw.org/)
* [Hire for Talent](https://hirefortalent.ca/)
* [Worktopia](https://worktopia.ca/)

## Project Team Members

A sincere thank you to the Employment Lifecycle Accessibility Framework project team members and their organizations for generously sharing their time and expertise.

**Amy Lonsberry**, Policy, Privacy and Project Officer, The Sinneave Family Foundation

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| If you have questions or would like more information,  please contact can@carleton.ca. |