

Better Accommodation Project

Questions and Answers

GENERAL

1. What is the Better Accommodation Project (BAP)?

The Better Accommodation Project (BAP) is a one-year initiative sponsored by Tina Namiesniowski, the Deputy Minister Champion (DMC) for Federal Employees with Disabilities. Its goal is to improve how federal employees with disabilities are accommodated across the public service. The project supports the work of the Deputy Minister Accessibility Group, which helps the Government of Canada remove barriers and improve accessibility.

In September 2024, nine departments who committed to accelerating progress on moving toward best-in-class accommodations focused on barrier removal for employees with disabilities were selected for BAP. They will work with experts and the DMC's office to identify problems in their current processes and test new solutions. Employees with disabilities will be involved every step of the way, following the "Nothing Without Us" principle.

To enable change across the federal public service, a practical guide accompanied by tools and resources (such as tip-sheets, process maps and infographics) will be developed. These resources will be shared widely to help improve accommodations for employees with disabilities across the public service.

2. Why do we need BAP?

The Government of Canada wants the federal public service to be the most accessible and inclusive in the world. To help achieve this, it has committed to:

- hiring 5,000 more people with disabilities by 2025;
- leading the way in following the [Accessible Canada Act](#); and
- creating a Canada without barriers by 2040.

Since 2019, when the Government of Canada launched the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#), there has been progress in identifying and removing workplace barriers. However, challenges remain in hiring, retaining, and supporting the career growth of employees with disabilities. To solve these issues, departments and agencies need to improve how they provide workplace accommodations. This will help employees with disabilities thrive at work.

Research shows that the benefits of timely and appropriate accommodations outweigh their costs. Organizations see significant returns in improved productivity, attracting and retaining talent, and reduced training costs for new employees. Over half of accommodations have no direct cost, and the rest cost an average of \$500 as a one-time expense.

Failing to provide appropriate accommodations has indirect costs, such as lost productivity and lower retention. It also negatively impacts employees' sense of belonging, performance, and mental and physical health.

The Better Accommodation Project aims to create lasting improvements in accommodations for all federal employees with disabilities. The project vision is to provide best-in-class accommodations that:

- reflect the social model of disability;
- are timely, consistent inclusive, and responsive; and
- ensure federal employees with disabilities get what they need to thrive in their jobs, no matter where they work.

3. Who will participate in BAP?

Nine departments have committed to accelerating progress on moving toward best-in-class accommodations to remove accessibility barriers for employees with disabilities:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Canadian Heritage
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Justice Canada
- Statistics Canada
- Transport Canada

4. How were participating departments selected?

Nine departments were chosen because they are committed to improving accommodations for employees with disabilities. To select departments, consideration was given to whether they made accommodations a top priority in their accessibility plans, showed they are ready for change, and agreed to dedicate resources to make these improvements happen within their organizations.

5. Why is BAP not open to all federal departments?

The Better Accommodation Project is focused on innovation, collaboration and trying new ideas. Starting with a small group of dedicated departments makes it easier to adapt to each department's unique needs and challenges.

We understand that some employees might feel disappointed if their department isn't part of the first group of partners. However, it wouldn't be practical to run this project in all 80+ federal departments at once. By focusing on a smaller group, we can create promising solutions that can later be shared and expanded to other departments. Sharing what we learn is a key part of the project.

6. Can other departments join BAP?

Participating departments have already been selected for the project.

7. How long will this project run?

BAP was launched on September 10, 2024, and will run for one year, until September 2025.

The best practices, tools, and resources developed this year will be available to all federal departments and agencies to help them improve accommodations for employees with disabilities.

By the end of September 2025, participating departments will have worked with the DMC office, behavioral scientists, and other experts to:

- assess their accommodation services against key success factors;
- identify pain points in their accommodation process;
- implement and test solutions to address these pain points;
- share their findings with other federal departments; and
- share best practices and learnings at public service-wide events.

Further steps to fully leverage the outcomes of the Better Accommodation Project will be taken beyond September 2025.

8. Will employees with disabilities be consulted throughout the project?

The Better Accommodation Project follows the “Nothing Without Us” principle. This means that participating departments will work closely with employees with disabilities and their networks. They will also involve key teams like Human Resources, Facilities Management, Finance, Procurement, Communications, and Information Technology. This ensures that diverse perspectives inform our work on accommodation challenges and solutions.

Participating departments are also encouraged to review feedback from employees with disabilities on their Accessibility Plans and use it to make improvements.

GOVERNANCE

9. How is BAP governed?

The Better Accommodation Project (BAP) is led by Tina Namiesniowski, the Deputy Minister Champion (DMC) for Federal Employees with Disabilities.

The DMC's office will:

- lead and guide the design, delivery, and evaluation of the project,
- share knowledge and communicate progress, and
- facilitate linkages between internal and external experts and the project.

A group of deputy ministers, called the Deputy Minister Reference Group, will help oversee the project and support knowledge sharing.

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Canadian Heritage
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Department of Justice
- Statistics Canada
- Transport Canada
- Treasury Board Secretariat (including representatives of the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Office of Public Service Accessibility)
- Department of Finance (ally of the project)

The Assistant Deputy Minister Steering Group is co-chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Branch, Employment and Social Development Canada and Assistant Deputy Minister, Office of Public Sector Accessibility, Treasury Board Secretariat. This group supports operational needs of participating departments to define, prototype and evaluate accommodation solutions during the life of the BAP initiative.

10. Who is supporting the participating departments in the BAP?

Participating departments will be supported as follows:

- a. **Deputy Minister Chair's Office:** is responsible for the overall delivery of the project, for coordination with implementing partners and for developing knowledge mobilization tools and resources.
- b. **Behavioural science fellows** from the Privy Council Office's Impact and Innovation Unit have been brought into the Deputy Minister Chair's Office to support participating departments in taking a behavioural-science approach to innovation.
- c. **BAP Advisory Group (internal experts)** consists of public service employees who demonstrate important contributions to reforming approaches for accommodation.
- d. **BAP external experts** comprised of leaders outside the public service who will provide advice and guidance from their experience and knowledge on improving workplace accommodations.

FUNDING

11. How is this project being funded?

Deputy ministers of the nine participating departments have agreed to use funding within their departmental budget to resource their department's participation. In addition, Employment and Social Development Canada provides funding to support the Deputy Minister Champion's office Better Accommodation Project coordination and management team.

PROJECT MILESTONES

12. How will DMC be tracking results throughout the project?

The DMC has oversight of the project and monitors its progress. Both the BAP team and participating departments will report on key milestones throughout the project.

RESULTS AND IMPACTS

13. What do we want to achieve with BAP?

In the short term, each department will identify issues in their accommodation process and test solutions for improvement during the project.

Based on the project's findings, a practical guide accompanied by tools and resources, such as tip sheets, process maps, and infographics, will be created. These materials will be available to all federal departments and agencies to help them improve accommodations for employees with disabilities.

The long-term vision for the Better Accommodation Project is to create lasting, significant improvements in how we accommodate all federal employees with disabilities.

14. How will other departments benefit from BAP, and at what point?

Based on the project's findings, a guide accompanied by tools and resources, such as tip sheets, process maps, and infographics, will be created. These materials will be available to all federal departments and agencies to help them improve accommodations for employees with disabilities.

15. How does the Better Accommodations Project fit with the Directive on the Duty to Accommodate?

The goal of the [Directive on the Duty to Accommodate](#) is to create an inclusive, barrier-free workplace where everyone has equal access to opportunities in the core public administration. Insights from the Better Accommodation Project will support this Directive by showcasing the most effective practices for removing barriers in the accommodation process. Departments will gain practical information to help them consistently implement the Directive's requirements across the federal public service.

16. How can I get more information about BAP?

For more information about this project, you can write to esdc.bap-pama.edsc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca or visit the [BAP GcXchange site](#). We also invite you to read this recent [LinkedIn article](#) published by the Deputy Minister Champion.