



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Developing accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan

Organizations with 50 or more employees



Under Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), private and not-for-profit organizations with 50 or more employees must create a multi-year accessibility plan and accessibility policies. This guide and templates will help you get started.

What you need to do

By January 1, 2014:

- Create **accessibility policies** that demonstrate your organization's commitment to becoming more accessible
- Create a **multi-year accessibility plan** that outlines what you will do to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in your organization

Steps to consider

The law is flexible, so you can develop a plan and accessibility policies in a way that works best for your organization.

Step 1. Determine what you have to do

Ontario's accessibility laws are being phased in over several years to give you time to plan. But you need to know up front what you have to do so you can develop your plan and policies. Use the Wizard at Ontario.ca/AccessON to find out specifically what you have to do and when.

Tip: Consider assigning an employee or establishing a team to create your accessibility policies and plan.

Step 2. Assess your level of accessibility

Assess your organization to determine where accessibility barriers exist.

What is a barrier?

Barriers to accessibility are obstacles that make it difficult – sometimes impossible – for people with disabilities to take part in society, to do things like shopping, working or taking public transit.

Meeting Ontario's accessibility laws can help you remove some barriers, but there may be others that are unique to your organization.

Example: As part of his requirements under Ontario's law, Dominic's salon will provide accessibility training to staff in 2015 to help remove attitudinal barriers. Dominic also develops an action plan to address the set up of the store, which is inaccessible to someone with a walker or wheelchair – a barrier identified in his assessment.

Review your organization's policies and business practices to see if you're already meeting any of Ontario's accessibility laws. For example, do your job advertisements already state that accommodations will be made for people with disabilities?

Next, think about what barriers might exist when customers or employees with disabilities interact with your organization. There are many types of barriers. Some are visible, many are invisible. To learn more about the different kinds of barriers, visit: [Ontario.ca/sr67](https://ontario.ca/sr67).

You don't have to address every barrier right away. You may want to prioritize barriers that have the biggest impact on your customers and employees with disabilities.

Step 3. Develop accessibility policies and a plan

Your policies set out the rules your organization will put in place to become more accessible. Your plan creates a road map to help you meet Ontario's accessibility laws and remove accessibility barriers.

Tip: Improving accessibility will impact all areas of your organization. Let your employees know that you're developing an accessibility plan and will need their input or cooperation.

Statement of commitment

Develop a statement of commitment that summarizes your organization's goals, values and commitment to meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

Accessibility policies

You don't have to have a formal policy for each of Ontario's accessibility laws. Think about your accessibility goals and if creating a policy could help you achieve them. You can create new policies, or integrate them into existing ones, such as the ones you created for Ontario's accessible customer service standard. The law is flexible so do what works best for your organization.

Example: A staff working group at a large retailer decided to create a policy on how employees will be trained on accessibility. Since the company already has a training program, they simply integrated accessibility into the existing policy.

Accessibility plan

Determine what actions you will take to meet Ontario's accessibility laws, remove accessibility barriers and prevent future barriers.

Visit Ontario.ca/AccessON for free resources to help you get started and achieve your goals.

Example: A design firm manager lets staff know that all project plans must address how accessibility has been incorporated into project planning processes. This will ensure staff consider the needs of people with disabilities from the start and should prevent creating inadvertent barriers in their firm's designs.

After determining the actions you plan to take, consider what needs to be done first, who will be responsible, what resources will be needed and when to put your strategies in motion.

Step 4. Put them in writing

You can combine your statement of commitment, policies and plan in one document – like the template included in this guide – or in a way that best suits your organization. It’s also up to you to determine the level of detail in your accessibility policies and plan. It will likely depend on your accessibility goals and when you hope to achieve outcomes.

Example: A large convention centre’s multi-year accessibility plan has a step-by-step plan to ensure employees consider accessibility when purchasing kiosks starting in 2014. However, the plan has less detail on how they will make all their websites accessible because they don’t have to do that until 2021.



Check out the Template in Appendix A to develop accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan.

Step 5. Let people know

Post your multi-year accessibility plan on your organization’s website, if you have one, or make it available in some other way, like a bulletin board in a public area. Your statement of commitment and policies must also be publicly available, but you don’t have to post them on your website. If requested, you need to provide your plan and policies in an accessible format.

Share your accessibility plan and policies with your employees. You can announce them with a memo from a senior leader or during a staff meeting.

Step 6. Follow up and report your success

It's up to you how you will maintain your policies. You should consider if they need to be updated anytime you make significant changes to your business practices.

Your plan needs to be updated every five years. You may want to consider harmonizing accessibility planning with your business planning activities so you build accessibility into your regular business processes.

You will need to report your accessibility achievements every three years. Reviewing your plan annually or prior to reporting your compliance with Ontario's accessibility laws will give you the opportunity to highlight what you have accomplished.

Example: A manufacturing company plans its budgets on a three year operating cycle. To streamline accessibility planning, they decide to update their multi-year accessibility plan when the company is updating its operating cycle, rather than every five years.

Questions?

For more detailed information, you can also read the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(191/11\)](#).

Or contact:

Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025

TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-7095

Email: accessibility@ontario.ca

please note:

This guide is not legal advice. If you require assistance in interpreting the legislation or the regulation, please contact your legal adviser. This guide has been created to help you understand the legislation and/or regulation and does not replace the official version of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). If there is any conflict between this guide and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation or the AODA, the regulation and the AODA are the final authorities.

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Appendix A: Sample Accessibility Policies and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Template

This template is based on requirements for most large private and non-profit organizations. You can use this as a starting point, and add any elements that apply to your organization specifically.

Accessibility Plan and Policies for _____

This 2014-21 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that _____ will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

_____ is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Accessible Emergency Information

_____ is committed to providing the customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Training

_____ will provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

_____ will take the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws by **January 1, 2015**.

- _____
- _____

Kiosks

_____ will take the following steps to ensure employees consider the needs of people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks by **January 1, 2014**.

- _____
- _____

Information and communications

_____ is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

_____ will take the following steps to make all new websites and content on those sites conform with WCAG 2.0, Level A by **January 1, 2014**.

- _____
- _____

_____ will take the following steps to make ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request by **January 1, 2015**.

- _____
- _____

_____ will take the following steps to make sure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request by **January 1, 2016**.

- _____
- _____

_____ will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by **January 1, 2021**.

- _____
- _____

Employment

_____ is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, _____ will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired.

- _____
- _____

_____ will take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability.

- _____
- _____

We will take the following steps to ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account if _____ is using performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

- _____
- _____

_____ will take the following steps to prevent and remove other accessibility barriers identified.

- _____
- _____

For More Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact _____ at:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request from:
