

Access Communications Co-operative Limited

2023-2026 Accessibility Plan

June 1, 2023

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# **1. General**

## ****1.1 Message from the CEO – Carmela Haines****

I am proud to introduce Access Communications Co-operative Limited's (Access Communications) Accessibility Plan for 2023-2026. This plan formalizes our commitment to improving accessibility at Access Communications for its employees, volunteers, members, and customers. Our Accessibility Plan is based on consultations with our employees and key stakeholders regarding reducing barriers. Their input and feedback have been critical to help chart this course. We will conduct an annual review of the plan to ensure that the plan remains responsive to changes within our organization, emerging accessibility challenges, and updates in regulations or best practices. This will enable us to continually improve and enhance our accessibility initiatives.

We are committed to improving accessibility in six key areas: our built environment, employment, information, and communication technologies (ICT), communication (other than ICT), procurement of goods, services, and facilities, and the design and delivery of programs and services. Access Communications will undertake an in-depth review of all the information gathered through the survey and feedback from all stakeholder groups in executing this plan.

We commit to ongoing communication with individuals who face barriers. We value their feedback and it will help us make our organization more accessible and inclusive.

I want to thank our committee for their hard work creating this plan. Their dedication shows our strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion. I also want to thank everyone who took time the time to share with us their accessibility challenges and barriers. Your feedback will help shape our future as an organization in this area.

## ****1.2 Contact Information & Feedback Process****

You can submit feedback anonymously about accessibility or this plan by contacting:

Senior Manager Human Resources

accessibility@myaccess.coop

306-565-5344

2250 Park Street

Regina, SK

S4N 7K7

Information about how to submit feedback to is also available on our public website at the following link: <https://www.myaccess.ca/accessibility/accessibility-feedback>

1.3 Alternative Formats

You can request alternative formats of this plan, and a description of our feedback process by contacting us as described in the feedback section above.

An electronic version (that is compatible with assistive technology) of this plan can be downloaded immediately from our website at: <https://www.myaccess.ca/accessibility/accessibility-plan>

We will provide the following alternative formats within 15 days of the initial request:

* Print
* Large print (increased font size)

We will provide the following alternative formats within 45 days of the initial request:

* Braille (a system of raised dots that people who are blind or who have low vision can read with their fingers)
* Audio (a recording of someone reading the text out loud)­­­

## ****1.4 Executive Summary****

The [Accessible Canada Act](https://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/) (ACA) came into effect in July 2019. Its goal is to benefit Canadians, especially those living with disabilities, by realizing a Canada that is free of barriers by 2040. The ACA has seven key principles. These include that all persons are to have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society and that persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures. The key principles of the ACA are outlined in the appendix. As part of the ACA, and as a federally regulated organization, Access Communications is required to publish an accessibility plan.

Access Communications is a not-for-profit co-operative that provides internet, television, telephone, and security monitoring services to 235 communities and 200,000 sq. km. of rural areas in Saskatchewan. We have staff employed throughout the province servicing our communities. As an organization, we have prioritized accessibility in our operations for quite some time. We have demonstrated this commitment through various measures, such as incorporating accessibility features in the layout and design of recent office renovations. These renovations included adjustable desks and lower door handles to ensure that our spaces are accessible to individuals with diverse needs. Additionally, our established HR practices also reflect our dedication to accessibility throughout our organization.

Access Communications worked closely with Left Turn Right Turn Ltd. (LTRT). They are a consultant that specializes in this area. They assisted in completing surveys and obtaining appropriate feedback from various stakeholder groups regarding accessibility. In completing this plan, LTRT also assisted with ensuring alignment with the Federal Legislation.

The ACA identifies seven priority areas, of which six are relevant to Access Communications. The priority areas are employment, the built environment, information, and communications technologies (ICT), communications (other than ICT), the procurement of goods, services and facilities and the design and delivery of programs and services.

This plan summarizes the accessibility barriers we have identified related to those priority areas. It also sets out how we intend to identify additional barriers, remove the barriers we have already identified, and prevent new barriers in these areas. It covers the first three years after the publication of the current plan.

**1.5 Definitions**

The following definitions apply throughout this plan:

Disability: Any impairment, or difference in physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, or communication ability. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or can change over time.

Barrier: Anything that might hinder people with disabilities’ full and equal participation. Barriers can be architectural, technological, attitudinal, based on information or communications, or can be the result of a policy or procedure.

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people, including people with a variety of disabilities, to access them.

# **2. Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA**

**2.1 The Built Environment**

 In Regina the co-operative has a combined head office and retail location, while also maintaining a separate warehousing facility. In addition, Access Communications operates retail and office locations throughout Saskatchewan in Estevan, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Weyburn, and Yorkton. The objective is to ensure everyone (staff/public) who enters the organization’s locations/offices have barrier-free access to full and equal participation.

Access Communications has recently updated all workstations to meet accessibility standards at all locations. In addition, feedback received through consultations will be looked upon to implement improvements as identified for the built environment, related to elimination of barriers thereby assisting Access Communications in alignment with ACA principles.

Access Communications reviewed all its offices, retail locations, and buildings in Saskatchewan to identify built environment barriers. The locations are used by employees, volunteers, and customers.

Accessibility Goals

* Access Communications will review and update, as necessary, all required accessible signage at every location to identify what is accessible.
* Access Communications will review and evaluate feedback from the survey and implement improvements to the built environment to remove and prevent barriers.
* Access Communications will continually review the built environment to identify ways to implement accessibility best practices, where possible.
* Access Communications will continue to proactively incorporate accessibility considerations into plans for future renovations and/or in acquiring new space.

## ****2.2 Employment****

Tackling employment-related barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA’s principles. It will help make sure that all people have the same employment-related opportunities. Access Communications has a host of indoor administrative and outdoor physical labour type positions. Travel and performance of duties within a customer’s home and yard is required for certain positions. Hybrid work from home may be accommodated for certain positions where workstations in home replicate the organization’s internal policy standards.

Access Communications will evaluate and review the consultation feedback received in consideration of its hiring and onboarding, training, and wellbeing to identify and eliminate employment barriers.

Access Communications has been responsive to the needs of its employees as they arise. Managers have a formal role in the accommodations process as they are the first people to be approached by an employee. In addition, management is also provided with Mental Health in the Workplace training.

Accessibility Goals

* Access Communication employees will receive training on the fundamental principles of accessible communications, which includes understanding alternate formats and their responsibilities in accommodating such requests. This training will ensure that our employees have the knowledge and skills to effectively meet the needs of individuals who require accessible communication formats.
* Access Communications will review its recruitment and hiring process to find and remove accessibility barriers for job applicants.
* Access Communications will publish and share guidelines on how employees and applicants with disabilities can request accommodation.
* Access Communications will include information in job postings about how applicants can request and receive accommodation during the hiring process. Access will also remind job applicants they can request accommodation when contacted for an interview.

**2.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

Addressing ICT-related barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA’s principles. Ensuring that Access Communications’ internal and external technology tools, including our internal and external websites, are accessible will help employees and customers have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society.

Accessibility Goals

* Access Communications will research, evaluate, and review its communication equipment and technologies to identify barriers and make plans to make them accessible.

Access Communications will complete further research, evaluation, and review of its internal and external websites to identify barriers and make them more accessible. The external website will have its own accessibility page.

**2.4 Communication, other than ICT**

Tackling communication-related barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA’s principles. It will ensure that all people are treated with dignity and have meaningful options and the freedom to make their own choices, with support if they desire.

Access Communication’s employees and customers communicate in several different ways, from reviewing our internal/external websites, in-person, over the phone, via online chat, and email. A review was done of all internal and external communications, besides ICT, to identify barriers and solutions.

Accessibility Goals

* Access Communications will provide awareness training to its staff for alternate forms of accessibility communication and how to accommodate such requests.
* Access Communications will establish internal standards for plain and inclusive language and incorporate them into internal and external communications whenever possible.
* Access Communications will ensure information in alternative formats is available upon request where possible.

**2.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities**

Addressing procurement-based barriers will help Access Communications act on the ACA’s principles. It will help make sure that all persons have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society.

Access Communications buys various products and services to support our work and employees. We use a system of rules and guidelines to ensure we buy competitively priced products, and services for the best value for money. We are dedicated to ensuring the products and services we buy are as accessible as possible. The following goals will ensure accessibility is considered when we make a new purchase.
Accessibility Goals

* Access Communications will include a review for accessibility considerations for the build environment within its final approval processes to avoid barriers and align with ACA principles where possible. Access Communications will provide awareness training for individuals responsible for procurement within the build environment. receive training and information about how to include accessibility requirements in procurement activities.

**2.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

Access Communications provides local television programing within Saskatchewan, barriers and actions areas related to this have been listed under [Communications, other than ICTs](https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/planaccess23.htm#6).

**2.7 Transportation**

Access Communications Co-operative does not offer transportation services and therefore has nothing to report under this heading.

# **3. Consultations**

Access Communications formed an internal working group with representation from all departments to develop the plan. In addition, Access Communications retained the services of Left Turn Right Turn (LTRT), an independent consultant, to assist in identifying barriers and potential solutions. In addition, LTRT provided support and assistance surveying customers, and employees to understand the barriers that they face. They also supported Access by utilizing their subject matter expertise to consult people with disabilities. LTRT employees also provided additional insights through their lived experience and contributed their expertise in accessibility policy development, leading practices, and disability law. Specifically, LTRT assisted Access Communications in carrying out and tabulating the survey feedback from the consultations with its employees, customers, volunteers, and members. This helped to identify current and potential accessibility barriers and assisted in building the plan to remove identified barriers and prevent news ones.

**3.1 Internal Consultations**

LTRT assisted Access Communications in performing an anonymous and confidential employee and volunteer survey in March 2023 with a response rate of 33%.

LTRT analyzed the survey results and comments to identify common themes, which were categorized into physical, technological, and attitudinal barriers. This information was used in developing the accessibility plan.

**3.2 External Consultations**

LTRT assisted Access Communications in performing an anonymous and confidential customer and member survey in March 2023 with a 3% response rate. LTRT analyzed the survey results and comments to identify common themes, which were categorized into physical, technological, and attitudinal barriers. This information was used in developing the accessibility plan.

On a go-forward basis, Access Communications will continue to consult people with disabilities annually.

**4. Conclusion**
This accessibility plan identifies successes, barriers, and next steps to remove barriers and prevent new ones based on the feedback received through the internal and external consultation phases.

Access Communications is committed to implementing this plan to achieve a solid foundation and a fully accessible Canada by 2040.

# **APPENDIX – The Principles of the ACA**

The Principles of the ACA are set out at [section 6](https://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/page-1.html#h-1153434) of that Act. They are:

1. all persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;
2. all persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities;
3. all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;
4. all persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;
5. laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;
6. persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
7. the development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Access Communications considered these principles in preparing its accessibility plan.