



## HEQCO Policy 1.8 — Approved December 8, 2021

# MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

### ***Message from the President & CEO: Janice Deakin***

HEQCO is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under Ontario's accessibility laws.

HEQCO is committed to developing, implementing, and maintaining policies that govern how we as an organization achieve or will achieve accessibility through meeting this regulation. To facilitate this commitment, HEQCO has established, maintains, and documents a multi-year accessibility plan, that is reviewed and updated at least once every five years to identify progress made in addressing barriers. The plan will be posted on the HEQCO Website.

### ***Introduction***

HEQCO strives to meet the needs of our employees and customers with disabilities and is working hard to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

HEQCO is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This accessibility plan outlines the steps we are taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities. Our plan shows how we will fulfil our role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, together with the Integrated Accessibility Policy, were developed in accordance with the requirements of the AODA, and together they outline our commitment and strategy to achieve accessibility goals. The policy and the plan are available on the HEQCO website, and can be provided in an accessible format on request.

When applicable, HEQCO trains every person on our accessibility policies as soon as practicable after being hired and provides training in respect of any changes to the policies.



We maintain records of the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

## **Initiatives and Outcomes:**

### **Customer Service**

#### **Initiatives:**

HEQCO is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

HEQCO uses reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- Goods or services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are given an equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- Persons with disabilities and their service animals are accommodated in all aspects of service provision unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
- HEQCO employees, when communicating with a person with a disability, will do so in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.

#### **Outcomes:**

People with disabilities receive HEQCO resources of the same quality and within reasonable timelines as others and benefit equally from customer service initiatives.

HEQCO employees have access to tools, resources, policies and procedures to support accessible customer service.

### **Information and Communications**

#### **Initiatives:**

##### *Accessible Formats, Communication Supports and Web Content*

HEQCO 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. We want to achieve the most effective and efficient access to information for all users.

A feedback process has been established that is accessible; feedback can also be provided in alternate formats including via telephone, mail and in person. Information about these processes is communicated to the public and available on our website.

Our website has been designed to be user-friendly for people with a range of needs. People are encouraged to browse and evaluate it against their needs and contact HEQCO via email or phone if they require additional information.

The provision of accessible formats and communication supports to persons with disabilities will be done in a timely manner, and upon request, taking into account the individual's accessibility needs, and at no extra cost above what is charged to others. All new content on the HEQCO website conforms with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") 2.0, Level AA.

The Integrated Accessibility Policy was developed and is available on the HEQCO website.

Feedback can be provided to the Director, Communications and a response will be provided within five business days.

HEQCO has taken the following steps to ensure compliance with this standard:

- Continue to assess accessibility of existing website organization and content
- Consult with persons requesting alternative formats
- Ensure that Internet websites and web content conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA
- Post a notice on the HEQCO website and on physical premises that information is available in a variety of accessible formats.

### **Outcomes:**

HEQCO employees have the tools and resources to develop and provide information and publications in accessible formats.

HEQCO employees, customers and visitors with disabilities will have equal access to HEQCO information through communication supports, alternate formats, accessible websites and digital content.



## **Employment**

### **Initiatives:**

HEQCO is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

HEQCO is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that attract and retain individuals with disabilities. We have taken the following steps to notify the public and employees that, when requested, HEQCO will accommodate people with disabilities throughout the recruitment and onboarding processes.

HEQCO will meet accessibility laws when developing or making major changes to public spaces.

### **Recruitment**

HEQCO is committed to ensuring that our recruitment and assessment processes are fair and accessible.

HEQCO will specify that accommodation is available for applicants with disabilities in recruitment material, and with regards to interviews and assessments:

- When making offers of employment, notify successful applicant of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Inform employees of policies supporting employees with disabilities. Provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after hiring.
- Provide updated information on accommodations policies to employees when changes occur.
- Consult with employee to determine suitability of format or support.

### **Return to Work**

HEQCO is committed to developing and putting in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability.

### **Outcomes:**



Increased opportunity for employment, engagement and advancement of employees with disabilities at HEQCO.

Clear and consistent employment and accommodation policies and procedures that seek to remove systemic barriers and ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully as job applicants and employees at HEQCO.

### **Procurement**

HEQCO is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Consistent with our mandate, HEQCO'S primary procurement activity is to acquire research services. All RFPs and Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are posted on our website. Our current website is compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

- RFPs and EOIs for procurement of research services are accessible on our new web platform.
- HEQCO's website includes a notation that informs the public that HEQCO is compliant with the requirements of the AODA and its regulations.
- HEQCO meets individual requests for materials related to procurement of research services on a case-by-case basis and has done so since January 1, 2015.

### **Training**

#### **Initiatives:**

HEQCO is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it applies to people with disabilities.

Accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities is a core value for HEQCO and for that reason, HEQCO provides training to employees and volunteers on accessibility standards and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it relates to people with disabilities. Training is provided in a way that best suits the duties and needs of employees and volunteers and every person who deals with the public on behalf of HEQCO, including third parties i.e., employees, agents, volunteers, management. In addition, employees may require training on one or more of the standards — information and communications, employment or customer service, as they relate to the duties and responsibilities of their position.



HEQCO has taken the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet current standards and legislation:

- Provide educational or training resources in an accessible format that takes the accessibility needs of a person with a disability into account.
- Ensure new employees complete training within 30 days of starting employment or internship.
- Keep and maintain a database of training that includes participants' names and dates of completion.

### **Outcomes:**

HEQCO employees understand their responsibility to provide accessible goods, services and facilities that consider the needs of employees, customers and visitors with disabilities.

Employees with disabilities have equitable access to learning, development and career growth opportunities.

### **For more Information**

*For more information on the accessibility plan, please contact:*

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Our accessibility plan is publicly posted on our website and/or social media accounts.

Standard and accessible formats of this document are freely available on request from

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