



# HEQCO MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN (2021–2026): ANNUAL STATUS REPORT 2023

## Introduction

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) strives to meet the needs of its employees and customers with disabilities and is working to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

HEQCO is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). 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 fulfill 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 Annual Status Report highlights the progress HEQCO has made with respect to accessibility and the initiatives listed in the Multi-year Accessibility Plan 2021–2026. Some areas of progress are summarized below.

## Customer Service

- HEQCO operates as a virtual agency, but staff remain committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities either by phone, mail, email or when presenting at in-person events.
- HEQCO's website is updated to ensure that persons with disabilities are given an equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from HEQCO's research products.
- HEQCO hosted an in-person conference in November 2023 which included an accessible online registration process, conference content and conference venue.
- HEQCO provided mental health supports as part of the conference agenda through dedicated sessions designed to support individual needs for quiet time and reflection.

## Information and Communications

- All new content on the HEQCO website conforms with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA.



- HEQCO posted a notice on the website that information is available in a variety of accessible formats upon request.
- The provision of accessible formats and communication supports to persons with disabilities will be done in a timely manner and upon request, considering the individual's accessibility needs, and at no extra cost above what is charged to others.
- HEQCO uses accessible Alt Text in all social media content.
- HEQCO has an updated feedback process to ensure timely responses to inquiries or complaints regarding accessibility.
- HEQCO sought specific feedback on accessibility accommodations provided at the conference in November from persons who attended through a post-event survey.

## Recruitment and Employment

- HEQCO continued its commitment to fair and accessible employment practices and continues to recruit using accessible job postings, which include information on how HEQCO will accommodate people with disabilities throughout the recruitment and onboarding processes.
- HEQCO provides policies supporting employees with disabilities to new employees as soon as possible after hiring as part of the onboarding process.

## Procurement

- All RFPs (Requests for Proposals) and EOIs (Expressions of Interest) are posted on HEQCO's website in a format compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

## Training

- HEQCO provides training resources to employees on accessibility standards and on the *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.
- All new employees complete accessibility training within 30 days of employment or internship.
- HEQCO Communications staff received external training on AODA-compliant document creation and formatting as part of their ongoing professional development.
- HEQCO transitioned employee training records to the payroll software system to align the records and dates of completion for each employee.



## Further Information

HEQCO's accessibility plan is publicly posted at [www.heqco.ca](http://www.heqco.ca).

*For more information on the Accessibility Plan, please contact:*

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*Both standard and accessible formats of this document are free upon request from:*

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