**Ontario Arts Council Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2018-2021**

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# Message from the Director & CEO

I am pleased to share the Ontario Arts Council’s (OAC) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will guide its support for Deaf and disability communities over the next four years. This plan sets out OAC’s accessibility goals that will build upon our compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and continue to improve access in our programs, services and policies.

Since the AODA came into effect for the OAC in 2010, our organization has eagerly approached the accessibility benchmarks this landmark legislation set for becoming a more inclusive employer and service provider. We are proud of our achievements in complying with the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and you will read more about our milestones in the following report.

We also seek to go beyond the AODA in order to cultivate and encourage an inclusive and diverse artistic culture in Ontario, not just for the benefit of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, but for the benefit of all Ontarians.

In addition to implementing AODA standards, OAC has also taken a number of steps through OAC programs and services to build a more inclusive arts sector, to increase access for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities to create work and access the work of their peers, and to increase access for the public to see and experience the important work of arts professionals who are Deaf or have a disability.

In 2014, we launched our latest strategic plan, ***Vital Arts and Public Value: a Blueprint for 2014 to 2020***. In the plan, we named Deaf artists and artists with disabilities as a new OAC priority group as part of our commitment to ensuring equitable access for all Ontarians. To support this newest priority group, we listened to Deaf and disability arts community feedback and developed a number of new initiatives to improve access for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

Some initiatives are increased funding opportunities: the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program, the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects: Materials for Visual Artists, and accessibility support funds to help with the costs of submitting a grant application and the accessibility costs associated with a project.

Deaf artists and artists with disabilities are encouraged to apply to all OAC programs and so we ensured that more of our peer assessment panels include artists and arts professionals who are Deaf or have a disability. In moving from paper to an online grant applications and management system, we also established policies that accommodate Deaf artists and artists with disabilities at all stages of the granting process.

OAC takes seriously our responsibility to be accessibility leaders in the province and in the arts sector by being attentive to community feedback. Throughout our history, OAC has been proactive in seeking and responding to the input and recommendations that members of the Deaf and disability arts community have had about our funding programs, outreach services, and accessibility policies, implementing changes and removing barriers where possible. Recognizing the importance of being guided on our initiatives by people with lived experiences, we formed a Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group to receive feedback on issues and developments in the Deaf and disability arts community, and the barriers faced in relation to OAC policies, programs and practices. I am grateful for their contributions and knowledge in the development of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In addition, a disability-identified artist was appointed to the OAC board of directors this year, ensuring that we continue to lead and be led by people with disabilities and a disability politic.

At OAC, we believe that fostering a diverse arts community that is inclusive of Deaf people and people with disabilities requires a two-pronged approach: we must support Deaf artists and artists with disabilities by supporting their artistic practices, and we must build a more inclusive arts and culture sector overall. At the same time, we also bear in mind the second half of our mandate as articulated in our strategic plan, Public Value, and seek to make arts experiences, including the work of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, more accessible to the people of Ontario.

Although we take AODA compliance seriously, we engage accessibility through the recognition that cultivating a more inclusive and diverse arts culture leads to an overall higher standard of artistic excellence. As our organization continues to grow and develop, we will continue to listen and adapt, in order to support Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, and recognize the diversity of identities and artistic practices within all communities.

Sincerely,

Peter Caldwell

# Accessibility statement of commitment

As a public agency, funder and employer, the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) is committed to access and equity. By this we mean treating people fairly and taking into account and accommodating different barriers and needs, so that all groups and communities can have access to opportunities and resources.

OAC has an equity vision and commitment that is a part of its Equity Plan:

“We are inspired by and value Ontario’s artists, who help shape our thriving and diverse society and express the richness of our stories, histories and cultures. Therefore, as a public agency, funder and employer, OAC will lead and be responsive and inclusive in supporting diverse artists, artistic practices, arts communities and our own organization.”

As a result, we are deeply committed to addressing and removing barriers for all Ontarians and OAC will work towards accessibility in particular with regards to the standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) and others that may be implemented, recognizing that removing barriers and increasing support for Deaf Ontarians and Ontarians with disabilities is a much broader commitment than what is mandated by the AODA.

In addition to reaching compliance with all standards in effect under the AODA, OAC is actively removing barriers in our policies, programs, processes and services for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

Deaf artists or artists with disabilities includes individuals who have physical, mental or learning conditions with long-term, temporary or varying effects that may or may not be apparent. OAC identifies Deaf artists as distinct from artists with disabilities based on feedback from the Deaf community and the Canadian Hearing Society’s definition of “Culturally Deaf,” a term that refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture, and community of Deaf people.

# Accessibility Goals

The OAC strives at all times to ensure that our policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following accessibility goals:

* Ensure Deaf people and people with disabilities continue to have equitable access to information, employment, programs and services at OAC in a manner that respects their dignity and independence;
* Be responsive to feedback related to accessibility at OAC and our broader support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities;
* Foster the artistic practices and development of Deaf and disability arts in Ontario, recognizing the diversity of identities and artistic practices within communities.
* Collect data, track and publicly report on OAC support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, setting goals and planning initiatives accordingly.

Through achieving these goals, the OAC meets and exceeds AODA compliance.

# Accessibility Policies

OAC has accessibility policies relating to the general requirements and standards under the IASR that apply to our work at this time: the Customer Service Standard, Information and Communication Standard and Employment standard. Accessibility policies are the formal rules an organization puts in place to achieve its accessibility goals. You can view our policies [on our website](http://www.arts.on.ca/oac/media/oac/Access%20and%20Equity/OAC-Accessibility-policies.docx).

# AODA compliance and accessibility successes to date

OAC has met all of its requirements under the AODA that have come into effect so far and filed compliance reports as required.

Our organization also has had a long history of working with the arts community to promote and support artists who are Deaf or who have a disability. We have funded a number of projects, accessibility costs, reports, convenings, and organizations who have a mandate to support Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, and have supported the development of a disability arts sector in Ontario.

Below is an annual review of OAC’s AODA compliance, achievements in removing and preventing barriers and broader support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities from 2010 - 2017.

## 2010

An internal Accessibility Committee (Deaf and Disability Arts & Access Committee – DDAAC) was established by OAC to champion accessibility. The DDAAC has raised the profile of disability arts and accessibility for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities internally, undertakes specific activities to increase awareness such as staff learning sessions, presentations and attendance at Deaf and Disability Arts events.

Beginning in 2010, OAC has been in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation:

* OAC ensures that all staff who join the OAC receive training on this standard and how to communicate with people who are Deaf or have disabilities, within the first two weeks of joining our organization. Refresh training is available for existing employees.
* Wherever a formal process for procurement is used, OAC’s procurement documents includes language to ensure agents, contracted services and consultants receiving and responding to OAC’s procurement process are aware of OAC’s accessibility requirements under the AODA.
* OAC informs the public of their options to receive information and services in alternate formats.
* OAC has a public feedback form, which asks about experiences with accessibility and how OAC can provide more accessible service. OAC acts on that feedback to improve.
* OAC welcomes people who are Deaf or with disabilities who use assistive devices, support people or service animals and trains our staff on assistive devices available in our facilities.
* When support persons are required for OAC sponsored meetings, consultations, events or information sessions, the OAC pays for these support persons directly for their time and travel expenses, in accordance with government travel and hospitality guidelines.
* OAC will strive to ensure that all services are provided in accessible locations.
* If there is a disruption to the facilities or services usually accessed by people with disabilities, OAC posts a notice at all public entrances to our premises. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice is also provided on outgoing messages and on our website.
* Any new policies that are created regarding customer service are created with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity in mind.

## 2011

* OAC was a key organizer and sponsor of Front and Centre: Disability and Deaf Arts in Ontario, an event in partnership with the Canada Council for the Arts and the Art Gallery of Ontario. The event had a panel of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities sharing their perspectives on their arts practice and career development, and the event was an opportunity for networking and relationship-building amongst artists, arts organizations and funding agencies.

## 2012

2012 was a key year for compliance with a number of requirements under the IASR:

* Making public safety information available in accessible formats. Although OAC does not create public safety documents, guests are informed of the emergency and evacuation procedures and emergency personnel are notified and made aware of what support may be required.
* OAC employees were asked to inform Human Resources of any accommodation requirements in order to create individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities. If the employee requires assistance in case of an emergency, and consents to have information about their accommodation needs shared, OAC will provide the workplace emergency response information to the person designated by the employer to provide assistance to the employee. These individual plans will be reviewed and revised if needed, particularly when the employee moves to a different location and when OAC reviews its emergency policies and procedures. OAC will distribute intranet message reminders annually to ensure that all employees who need accommodations are aware and will also include it as a part of the enrolment process during orientation.
* OAC began notifying employees and the public about the availability of accommodations upon request at any stage in the recruitment, assessment or selection process for Deaf job applicants and applicants with disabilities.

## 2013

* Developed and published its accessibility policies for how OAC will meet its requirements under the Customer Service, Employment and Information and Communications IASR standards.
* Developed and released its first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2013-2017. The plan outlined the accessibility goals and milestones for the years ahead. It was developed after reviewing legislative requirements under the IASR, developing strategies to meet each requirement and consulting with the public.
* Reviewed its procurement practices, procedures and documents to create a procurement policy that incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where not practicable to do so and in that case, OAC would record the explanation upon request.
* Provided IASR training and training on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities, to all of our current staff, including management, as well as our board members, and will continue to do so as new staff and board members join the organization.
* Concretized our current employment practices into policies to address the requirements under the Employment Standards and shared these with all of our employees.
* Modified our employment letters and performance management forms to reflect policies for employment accommodation and an annual opportunity for employees and managers to discuss disability-related accommodation needs.
* Created a list of accommodation supports and resources that staff can utilize when requests arise for alternative formats or information.
* Provided our feedback processes, like surveys and feedback forms, in alternate formats to individuals upon request, and notified the public that alternate formats will be made available.
* OAC saw an increase of requests for information in alternate formats, most predominantly for American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes du québec (LSQ) interpreters to attend information/feedback meetings with OAC staff on our granting programs, which we have provided at no cost to the requester.
* Held focus groups with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities to gather their input on our draft Equity Plan and provided an ASL video of our draft plan. The OAC’s Board of Directors approved the final Equity Plan in October 2013.
* Published its first annual report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

## 2014

* Made Deaf artists and artists with disabilities a priority group in its new strategic plan, which extends to 2020.
* Created information videos on ways Deaf artists and artists with disabilities can engage and receive support from OAC, the videos also highlighted Deaf artists and artists with disabilities describing how they have been supported through our granting processes. The videos incorporate ASL and LSQ, as well as enhanced captioning.
* Added Tangled Art + Disability, an arts organization, as a third-party recommender for exhibition assistance grants.
* Commissioned Tangled Art + Disability to lead a research project to explore and report on barriers that Deaf artists and artists with disabilities experience. After this project was completed, we held a professional development session for staff where Tangled Arts spoke to the history of Deaf and disability arts in Canada and artists with disabilities spoke about creating work and the Deaf and Disability Arts milieu, and challenges such as the impact of arts grants on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments.
* Introduced a fund for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities that provides up to $500 annually when support is required to complete an application.
* Continued to provide communication vehicles, like surveys, feedback forms, and information sessions in alternate formats to individuals upon request, and notified the public that alternate formats will be made available.
* Ensured that any documents posted online associated with grant applications would be made available in accessible formats upon request.
* Ensured that accessible venues were used for public sessions arranged for and hosted by OAC and that ASL interpreters were in attendance.

## 2015

* Most of OAC’s requirements under the AODA were met in 2013 and 2014. The OAC continued to monitor and comply with these requirements already in effect and continued to develop its support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* OAC continued to provide information in accessible formats and provided communication supports for people with disabilities, such as ASL interpretation for OAC’s meetings with Deaf artists. The OAC ensured that the information was provided in a timely way, at no extra cost to the requester, and consulted with the person making the request to determine the most appropriate format or support that can be supplied by OAC.
* The availability of alternate accessible formats is shared with the public and communicated in our grant applications and guidelines.
* OAC launched a fund where Deaf artists and artists with disabilities who apply for a grant in any OAC project program may include the accessibility expenses, in addition to the grant amount requested, incurred in the course of creating, producing and realizing their work. This covers accessibility costs for the applicant with a disability as well as other professional artists who are Deaf or have a disability who are involved in the project.
* [Tangled Art + Disability](http://tangledarts.org/), an external third-party recommender for the Exhibition Assistance granting program, was also appointed as an external third-party recommender for the Theatre Creator’s Reserve granting program to ensure that more Deaf artists and artists with disabilities receive these funds.
* The Media Arts Projects Access Initiative was created as a pilot initiative to assist not-for-profit artist-run centre organizations funded by the Media Arts office for projects that provide Deaf media artists and media artists with disabilities with training, professional development, production and post-production opportunities that lead to the creation of a media artwork by each participant.
* OAC launched a pilot Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program to fund creation, production, professional development and skill-building opportunities for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* OAC launched a program where Deaf artists and artists with disabilities working in the visual arts or craft can apply for Materials and Supplies Assistance program, which provides up to $500 grants for the cost of buying materials and supplies to make work.
* OAC continued to have Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on our peer assessment panels, and has arranged and paid for the appropriate accommodation to facilitate full participation.

## 2016

* Continued to comply with the requirements under the AODA standards that have come into effect. This year there were no new requirements under the legislation for OAC.
* Built and launched a new accessible website that meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA, which is an international standard of web content accessibility. OAC is pleased that our website has met this standard in advance of the AODA’s 2021 requirement, and that our website can be more user-friendly to a wider group of visitors.
* Developed relationships with suppliers of alternate formats and ASL interpretation services both independently and through the Ontario Public Service and worked with these vendors to accommodate these requests in a timely manner.
* Moved to a new office location that is fully accessible for visitors and employees. Ensured all individual evacuation and emergency procedure plans for staff requiring accommodations were reviewed and updated accordingly.
* Provided training to staff on creating accessible documents.
* Launched NOVA, OAC’s new online and accessible granting system with the goal of making the application process more accessible to all Ontarians.
* Developed accommodation policies for people using NOVA who may face barriers due to a disability or technology access issues.
* Convened a Deaf and Disability Arts & Access advisory group, made up of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. This group was established to gather feedback on issues and developments in the Deaf and disability arts community, and the barriers faced in relation to OAC policies, programs and practices, from artists with relevant lived experiences and knowledge of the Deaf and disability arts field.
* Expanded the eligibility criteria for funding that covers the accessibility costs associated with completing a project so that:
	+ incorporated organizations that are Deaf or disability-led and have a mandate to serve and involve Deaf artists and artists with disabilities may request these funds;
	+ eligible expenses can include making a project accessible to audiences, participants or learners involved in the project; and
	+ requests for these funds can be made after the point of application.
* Conducted professional development and networking sessions for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on accessing grants and creating work.
* The Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program had its first assessment panel where the panelists were all Deaf arts professionals reviewing applications from Deaf artists.
* For the second year, funded an initiative to help make artist-run media arts production centres more accessible to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* Supported the production of “good news stories” profiling the achievements of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in Ontario.

## 2017

* Continued to comply with its requirements under the AODA.
* Refined its inclusive application policy and process to improve the way in which OAC receives and responds to accommodation requests.
* Began to develop an assessor accommodation policy to support assessors in their duties for OAC.
* Held a learning session for staff on Deaf culture. Topics included a history of Deaf people in Ontario including experiences of the education system, Deaf culture and communication, terms of reference that are familiar to Deaf people and that shape the context of Deaf artists’ work, concepts, themes and approaches, and the professional challenges and opportunities Deaf artists face.
* Convened further meetings of its Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group and continued to receive feedback from Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on OAC policies, programs and services as they impact the community.
* Consulted with the Deaf community on developing an ASL interpretation policy for OAC.
* Partnered with the Deaf Culture Centre and Small Language Connections on a grant writing training and mentorship program for Deaf artists.
* Supported the production of an information booklet on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and arts grants by the community-led ODSP and Arts Committee.
* Developed its next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan from 2018-2021 with input and feedback from the OAC Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group as well as its staff Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Committee.
* Filed a report confirming its compliance with the AODA.

# OAC’s Next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2018-2021

Under the AODA, the OAC must maintain a current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines what steps an organization will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and meet Ontario’s accessibility laws, and when it will do so. The plan states the steps for achieving the legislated accessibility requirements as applicable to our business and status as a large public sector organization under the IASR: the General Requirements, the Customer Service Standard, the Information & Communication Standard, and the Employment Standard.

As OAC does not provide public transportation, maintain any public kiosks, or have any of the types of public spaces referenced in the legislation, the Transportation Standard and the Design of Public Spaces Standard is not covered in our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Most of the applicable requirements under these standards have already come into effect from 2013 to 2017, which OAC has complied with. In addition, the requirement for OAC to have a public website that meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA has been achieved in advance of the January 1, 2021 requirement under the AODA. As a result, OAC has met all of its current requirements under the AODA.

OAC’s updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will outline how it will continue to address and remove barriers to access in its policies, programs, processes and services over the next four years and how it will continue to support Deaf Ontarians and Ontarians with disabilities more broadly outside of the requirements of the AODA, in keeping with frameworks that guide our work such as the Ontario Human Rights Code, and our Equity Plan and vision.

If any new standards come into effect that impact our work at the OAC, or if new requirements are introduced under any existing standards of the AODA, OAC will update its accessibility policies and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan accordingly.

If at any time from 2018-2021, the period of time covered by this plan, we take on business practices that expand the requirements that apply to OAC under the IASR, we will revise our plan accordingly.

## How we arrived at this plan: our process

* OAC reviewed its legislative requirements under the AODA and noted that compliance had been reached, including the one requirement regarding level of website accessibility that would come into effect for OAC in 2021.
* Listened to suggestions from our Deaf and Disability Arts & Access Advisory Group. Their recommendations form the majority of the elements under the plan.
* OAC’s Equity, Diversity, & Accessibility Coordinator and a working group of the internal Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Committee created a first draft of the plan.
* This first draft was provided to OAC Directors for feedback.
* OAC’s draft plan was taken to the Deaf and Disability Arts & Access Advisory Group for feedback.
* Final plan approved by the OAC Directors on November 14, 2017, and subsequently presented to the Board of Directors for their information.

## Measuring results/staying accountable

OAC will continue to practice accountability measures that were in place for the previous Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:

* Annual accessibility report - At the end of each year, OAC will prepare an annual accessibility report on how we have met our goals, commitments and the legislative requirements for that year, as laid out in this Plan. The report will be available on OAC’s website, and will be provided in alternate formats on request. We will also report on annual accessibility achievements in OAC’s Annual Report.
* Review feedback - We will monitor and evaluate any feedback we have received throughout the year related to accessibility and integrate this information into our annual accessibility report. Any comments on our accomplishments and plans will be welcome and will be used in our ongoing accessibility planning.
* Provide regular reports to OAC’s Deaf and Disability Arts & Access Advisory Group at twice annual meetings. We actively solicit their feedback and take their direction on relevant issues.
* OAC collects voluntary self-ID data on our priority groups through our granting application forms. OAC will report on the status of OAC support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities through publication of its performance measures or through other means, providing information in comparison to the population of Ontario.
* Revisions to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - If, through public consultation, feedback, the Deaf and Disability Arts & Access Advisory Group and our own accessibility action and planning processes, we feel that the Multi-year Accessibility Plan needs revision, we will update it to reflect these insights. We will ensure that we comply with the timelines and requirements of the IASR and will explain why we have made changes or if certain commitments have not been met, why that is. Any revisions will be available on OAC’s website, and will be provided in alternate formats on request.

# Our detailed plan: strategies and milestones

The details below document OAC’s annual plans for achieving the legislated accessibility requirements as applicable under AODA’s IASR, which are the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Accessible Information and Communications Standard, and Accessible Employment Standard. Only those requirements in the IASR that apply to our organization have been included in this Plan. The Plan is organized by standard, with key milestones listed under each standard. There is also a section of “other commitments” which details our broader support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities that do not fall under any specific legislative standard.

## Accessible Customer Service Standard

OAC has been complying with the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation since it came into effect for our organization in 2010. OAC has and will continue to:

* Provide new employees and volunteers with accessible customer service training. Refresh training is available for existing employees and volunteers.
* OAC provides communication supports or uses alternative forms of communicating with individuals as requested, such as ASL/LSQ interpretation, in-person or Skype meetings, Video Relay Services calls, in addition to email, phone, and e-communications through Nova, OAC’s online granting system. When connecting with a Deaf person or a person with a disability, we provide them with these options for communication and take their direction on how they would prefer to communicate.
* OAC informs applicants and other stakeholders of their options to receive information and services in alternate formats.
* Wherever a formal process for procurement is used, OAC’s procurement documents includes language to ensure agents, contracted services and consultants receiving and responding to OAC’s procurement process are aware of OAC’s accessibility requirements under the AODA.
* OAC welcomes people with disabilities who use assistive devices, support people or service animals and trains our staff on assistive devices in our facilities. For example, public meetings such as information sessions or assessment panels with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities are set up to accommodate assistive devices, service animals or support persons.
* OAC continues to gather feedback on the goods and services it provides and acts on that feedback to improve services to people with disabilities. Feedback is collected through our online public feedback form, through the assessment process, seeking feedback from the Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group, and formal and informal consultation processes with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. OAC provides or arranges for accessible formats and communication supports on request in order to provide feedback. Complaints are responded to promptly and in the format requested.
* OAC will strive to ensure that all its services are provided in accessible locations.
* OAC continues to post appropriate notices regarding service disruptions to accessible services.
* OAC reviews and amends the Accessible Customer Service Policy as required.
* Any new policies that are created regarding customer service are created with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity in mind.

**OAC is committed to do the following in:**

### 2018

* In order to make its customer service more accessible, OAC will implement and publicize its Inclusive Application Process Policy that makes Nova, its online granting system, more accessible. This policy will apply to how OAC communicates with and serves Deaf artists and artists with disabilities who require an accommodation at any point or throughout the application process.
* In making its customer service more accessible, OAC will implement and publicize its Inclusive Assessment Policy that makes assessment panel participation more accessible. This policy will apply to how OAC communicates with and serves Deaf assessors and assessors with disabilities who require an accommodation at any stage throughout the assessment process. It will also include guidelines for providing support material in accessible formats. Potential assessors will receive information on the assessment process and potential accommodations in advance of agreeing to become an assessor.
* OAC recognizes that the necessity to publicly disclose grant recipients may be a barrier to some people with disabilities applying to OAC, due to how ableism can negatively affect people with disabilities, causing some people to not want to be publicly identified in this way. OAC will review its requirement to publicly disclose the names of individual grant recipients of Deaf and Disability Arts programs and explore if it is possible to develop a process that maintains the confidentiality of recipients with disabilities.

### 2019

* OAC will create and make publicly available resources for grant writing in Nova such as videos, workshops and toolkits specifically for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* OAC will seek feedback on issues particular to applicants with cognitive disabilities.

### 2020

* OAC will explore formal partnerships with organizations and collectives that work in Deaf and disability arts and related communities. OAC can support such organizations that serve the community by spreading information about OAC programs and accessibility supports, connecting applicants to accessibility supports service providers, helping applicants with writing grants and distributing funds as a third party recommender.

### 2021

* OAC will continue to implement measures to meet its requirements under the customer service standard of the AODA and its other accessible customer service related commitments.

As Accessible Customer Service commitments are related to the provision of Accessible Information and Communications, the next section is closely related.

## Information & Communications

OAC will continue to, when hosting a meeting or event at a venue other than OAC offices, ensure that the venues are barrier-free and that we learn what the venue’s emergency procedures and accessibility features are of the facility so that we can determine what accommodations OAC/the venue will have to put in place to meet our goal of accessibility. If there are varying levels of accessibility at an event or meeting, we will let the public know, in alternate formats, as required.

It is our goal to establish a list of venues that OAC will use that meet a minimum standard of accessibility. We will work with participants with disabilities to meet their accommodation needs at the meeting and in an emergency situation. We will make communications supports available at meetings and events upon request.

OAC will continue to ensure all feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities such as through the Public Feedback Form on our accessible website and through feedback relayed to individual staff members, and through our Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group. OAC will ensure it provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports on request for the relay of feedback, and that we notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. Feedback is collected by the Executive Office to report back to the Directors and the Board of Directors.

OAC will continue to, upon request, provide or arrange to provide information in accessible formats and/or will provide communication supports for people with disabilities. OAC will ensure that the information will be provided in a timely way, at no extra cost, and will consult with the person making the request to determine the most appropriate format or support that can be supplied by OAC.

OAC will continue to ensure that information about the availability of alternate formats and communication supports is shared with the public.

OAC will more proactively let people know about developments relating to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

**OAC is committed to do the following in:**

### 2018

* OAC will develop an ASL/LSQ interpretation policy in consultation with interpreters and the Deaf community. This policy will cover OAC’s public communications, OAC public events such as meetings, receptions and assessment panels.
* OAC will translate key portions of the grant application form into ASL/LSQ and make it available on OAC’s website. Other portions of OAC’s grant applications may be offered in ASL/LSQ upon request.
* OAC’s budget will reflect the demand for ASL/LSQ videos.
* OAC’s website will strive to represent a greater diversity of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in images, videos and resources.
* OAC will establish an internal list of suppliers of different alternate formats and communication supports (ASL/LSQ interpreters, accessible document conversion, captioners, etc.) so that there is a consistent, standardized and vetted resource to access. If possible, Deaf people and people with disabilities will be consulted in determining the criteria for eligible suppliers, and providing feedback on the quality of accessible products/services.
* OAC commits to only using accessible venues for public events.
* To ensure quality control, OAC will explore developing an internal tool and identifying a role(s) and a related process for coordinating accessible format conversions and how accessibility support services are produced or provided.

### 2019

* OAC Communications Department will work with the Equity, Diversity and Accessibility Coordinator to learn more about Deaf culture and language and how to incorporate it into our corporate communications.
* OAC will strive for ASL/LSQ signed applications from Deaf individuals to be assessed by Deaf individuals.
* OAC’s website will contain more content in ASL/LSQ such as the core content for OAC granting programs, information on the assessment process, and how to make an application to OAC.
* OAC’s website will strive to increase the representation of the diversity of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in images, videos and resources.
* OAC will create an improved process to collate feedback received to ensure that this information informs our planning process around accessibility.

### 2020

* OAC will investigate Deaf arts and/or disability arts organizations that can be added as new third-party recommenders.
* OAC will consult with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities about our new website and Nova, our online granting system, with a particular interest in how accessible technology like screen readers interact with the system and ease of understanding information.
* OAC will create a publicly available toolkit on applying to grants using Nova and the accompanying assessment process. This will be accessible, include ASL/LSQ content, and examples of completed applications. It will be distributed through targeted outreach and communications.
* OAC will implement an internal tool and identify a role or roles and a related process for coordinating accessible format conversions and accessibility support services.

### 2021

* The requirement for OAC to have all public websites and web content posted after January 1, 2012 to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA comes into effect on January 1, 2021. As OAC’s new website already meets this standard, OAC is in compliance with this requirement in advance of its 2021 deadline and we will continue to update the website in compliance.
* OAC will continue to implement measures to meet its requirements under the information and communications standard of the AODA and its other accessible information and communications related commitments.

## Employment

OAC will continue to notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for job applicants with disabilities at any stage of the employment life cycle such as recruitment, assessment, selection, job functions, performance management and redeployment. OAC makes this information known in job postings, the invitation to interview, a letter/contract of employment to a successful applicant, orientation to new employees, and through OAC’s policies.

The following are detailed in OAC’s Accessible Employment Standard Policy:

* information on support for employees with disabilities, including providing employment-related accommodations for disabilities;
* accessible formats and communication supports required to do their jobs and to receive information available to all employees;
* individual accommodation plans including individual emergency response requirements and a return to work process if applicable;
* how accessibility needs are taken into account in performance management, career development, advancement and redeployment;
* where OAC has identified a conference or course as a training or education option, and an employee is unable to attend this conference or course because it poses barriers and their accommodation needs cannot be met, OAC will look for an accessible option to provide the training or education;
* employees’ privacy and needed accessible communication formats will be respected and any sharing of information about their accommodation needs will be discussed with them and plans for communication made with their consent; and all employees will be given updated information whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee’s accessibility needs due to a disability.

**OAC is committed to do the following in:**

### 2018

* OAC recognizes the value of having staff that self-identify with having disabilities. This representation is important to be inclusive and welcoming to diverse communities. OAC’s will conduct a staff self-ID survey and these results will help OAC understand the state of representation.
* OAC recognizes the importance of ASL and LSQ communication skills and will include ASL and LSQ fluency as an asset or a requirement in job descriptions for roles that serve the public.
* OAC will diversify its job postings to networks, organizations, social media accounts and service providers that have strong connections to Deaf and disability communities.
* OAC will explore using language in its recruitment communications (e.g. job postings and/or on the employment section of the website) that expresses its commitment to accessibility, encourages more people with disabilities to apply (such as identifying knowledge of Deaf and disability arts and lived experience of being Deaf or having a disability), identifies the requirements of the recruitment process, lists the types of accommodations available in the hiring process and plans accordingly to provide appropriate modifications to the process.
* OAC will update its supervisor’s guide to conducting performance reviews to expand the section on evaluating accessibility needs, accommodation and supports.

### 2019

* OAC will explore having a dedicated resource person who would act as the key connector for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. This resource person may have sign language capability. This could be achieved through a partnership with other organizations.

### 2020

* OAC will explore supporting and encouraging arts organizations to create employment opportunities for Deaf individuals and individuals with disabilities.

### 2021

* OAC will continue to implement measures to meet its requirements under the employment standard of the AODA and its other accessible employment related commitments.

## Procurement

OAC has created a procurement policy that incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities. We included in the procurement policy, the requirement to explain our decision, in any case where we did not feel it was practicable to incorporate accessibility into a procurement action.

OAC has included the following clauses in its procurement policy and in every procurement contract and request for proposal:

“OAC incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so. Wherever possible, it will record the explanation and provide the explanation in writing upon request.

OAC will expect any organization or individual who wishes to do business with our organization to identify applicable accessibility criteria and features for their specific goods, services and facilities and to confirm their compliance with the training requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation under the AODA. OAC will consider this information in our selection process.”

OAC is committed to do the following in:

### 2018 to 2021

* OAC will continue to implement measures to meet its requirements under the procurement requirement of the AODA and its other accessible procurement related commitments.

## Training

OAC provides training to all employees, volunteers, and all persons who participate in developing the organization’s policies and all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization on the requirements of Ontario’s accessibility standards and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities – the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Accessible Information and Communications Standard, the Accessible Employment Standard, and the General Requirements under the IASR.

OAC will continue to provide this training to all new employees as they join OAC and as practicable, and will continue to maintain records of this training, including the dates and number of individuals.

OAC also provides training and resources to its staff on topics related to people with disabilities, such as training on communicating with people experiencing mental health crises, Deaf arts and cultural sensitivity training, or general equity and access training and accessible communication when administering OAC accessibility support funds.

**OAC is committed to do the following in:**

### 2018

* OAC will provide training to our staff on the ethics of partnership and cultural appropriation as relating to Deaf and disability arts.
* OAC will create a plan to ensure that staff trainers on Deaf and Disability Arts and Accessibility who leave the organization have replacements trained and prepared to take on their training roles.

### 2019

* OAC will make formal ASL/LSQ training opportunities available to applicable staff to ensure that Deaf applicants and clients can better access OAC programs and services.
* OAC will create a plan for refresh training on the Accessibility Regulations for employees, volunteers and board members.
* OAC will provide training to granting staff on selecting assessors of all abilities and ensuring assessors have an accessible experience in a panel. This can include what to consider when inviting Deaf assessors and assessors with disabilities, how to consider issues of cultural appropriation and the ethics of partnership, understanding diversity and intersectionality in Deaf and disability arts, and considerations specific to Deaf culture. Related resources will be developed and provided to staff.

### 2020 and 2021

* OAC will continue to implement measures to meet its requirements under the training standard of the AODA and its other accessibility training related commitments.

## Other Commitments

There are a number of ways OAC can support Deaf artists and artists with disabilities outside of the areas covered by the IASR. Some of these commitments are listed here, with a timeframe for implementing other future commitments:

* OAC will continue to have a staff Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Committee, with representation from across the organization that will continue to implement initiatives in support of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and advocate for solutions to issues facing Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* OAC will continue to have a Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group. This group was established to gather feedback on issues and developments in the Deaf and disability arts community, and the barriers faced in relation to OAC policies, programs and practices, from artists with relevant lived experiences and knowledge of the Deaf and disability arts field.
* OAC will continue to offer accessibility support funds for making an application and covering the accessibility costs associated with making a project.
* OAC will continue to provide designated funding programs for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

**OAC is committed to do the following in:**

### 2018

* OAC will move funding for the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects Program into its base budget.
* OAC will ensure relevant staff have knowledge of Deaf and disability arts as a discipline and sector, understanding the unique characteristics, contributions, issues, barriers and needs in the field by providing ongoing learning and educational opportunities such as panels and formal training.
* OAC will explore ways to make the process to request accessibility support funds (for applications and projects) faster and more efficient as the waiting period for funds can be a barrier for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
* OAC will review and report on its level of support to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities through granting programs.
* OAC will increase its outreach to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and the organizations that serve the communities to ensure Deaf artists and artists with disabilities are aware of all granting programs.

### 2019

* OAC will provide accessibility funds for arts organizations that are not Deaf/disability-led but who are working with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and Deaf and disability communities, in order to make a contribution to the sector. This prioritizes support to organizations that are providing accessible arts experiences to professional Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, where Deaf and disability arts are integral to the artistic process and aesthetic outcomes.
* To increase its level of support to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, OAC will explore forms of designated funding programs.
* OAC will expand support for professional development opportunities for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities. This could include opportunities in arts organizations, arts internships, training, mentorship, networking and for international collaboration and connection with other Deaf and disability arts practitioners.

### 2020

* OAC will encourage Ontario arts organizations to embed accessibility in their project and operating budgets, and to demonstrate how they are incorporating accessibility into their programming and services.
* Explore partnerships with community organizations to support employers in training on accessibility in the arts and related best practices.

### 2021

* OAC will include an accessibility expenses budget line in its project and operating grant applications and will include accessibility questions in its grant applications.
* OAC will continue to implement its requirements under the AODA and its other commitments related to access and inclusion for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

## Accessibility plans and policies

OAC will continue to create and publish an annual accessibility report on the progress of our accessibility initiatives which will be made public on our website.

OAC will also maintain and update its existing statement of commitment to accessibility and our policies on how our organization achieves or will achieve accessibility.

OAC will update its policies and multi-year accessibility plan if we take on business practices that expand the requirements that apply to us under the IASR, and in response to any feedback received through our monitoring/accountability processes.

OAC will prepare a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2022 and upwards if required by the AODA, or this plan may take another form such as integration into OAC’s Equity Plan or its next Strategic Plan.

# Conclusion

We recognize that accessibility is an iterative process which shifts and expands with ongoing participation and feedback by the public. As such, we welcome Deaf people and people with disabilities to be part of the process as active participants over the next 4 years. We will communicate our progress once a year to ensure that the public knows how we have delivered on our commitments and any changes we have made to the Plan. The Plan and our annual updates will be posted on our website. Our goal is to create and maintain an integrated Plan built on feedback, and to be accountable to those people who apply for grants from the OAC and use our services. In supporting the broader arts community to become more inclusive and accessible, we will show leadership by messaging the importance of accessibility through communication avenues and by highlighting our commitment to accessibility through our actions, this Plan, and the Equity Plan. The OAC is committed to supporting Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and building a more accessible arts culture in recognition that these efforts will lead to a more inclusive, dynamic, and vital arts community in Ontario.

# We Welcome Feedback

We need input to ensure that OAC continually includes ways to reduce or eliminate barriers to OAC’s services, grant programs and events. Feedback can be provided on how this plan meets the needs of individuals who are Deaf or individuals with disabilities by:

Phone: Nina Small, Director of Human Resources
416-969-7426
1-800-387-0058 ext. 7426
E-mail: nsmall@arts.on.ca