

Ontario Arts Council

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2018-2021



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

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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 our support for Deaf and disability communities over the next four years. This plan sets out OAC's accessibility goals, which 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 adopted 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 (IASR), 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 taken a number of steps through our programs and services to build a more inclusive arts sector. This means increasing opportunities for Deaf artists

and artists with disabilities to create work and access the work of their peers, as well as increasing 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 2014-2020*. 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.

These initiatives include increased opportunities, such as the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program, the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects: Materials for Visual Artists program, and accessibility support funds to help cover the costs of submitting a grant application and the accessibility costs associated with undertaking a project.

Deaf artists and artists with disabilities are encouraged to apply to all OAC programs, 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 is serious about our responsibility as accessibility leaders in the province and in the arts sector, and welcomes 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 in our initiatives by people with lived experiences, we formed a Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group. This group provides feedback on issues and developments in the Deaf and disability arts community and on 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 arts professional 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.

In addition to our AODA compliance, we engage accessibility by recognizing 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. This means 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, OAC is deeply committed to addressing and removing barriers for all Ontarians and will work towards accessibility, with a particular focus on the standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with*

Disabilities Act (AODA) and the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)*. OAC will also address other standards that may be implemented. We also recognize 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 complying with all standards in effect under the AODA, OAC is actively removing barriers in its policies, programs, processes and services for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

Artists with disabilities include 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 the organization's 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 dignity and independence;
- Be responsive to feedback related to accessibility at OAC and 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:

- Customer Service Standard
- Information and Communication Standard
- Employment Standard

Accessibility policies are the formal rules an organization puts in place to achieve its accessibility goals. You can view the [policies](#) on the OAC website.

AODA Compliance and Accessibility Successes to Date

OAC has met all of its current requirements under the AODA and filed compliance reports as required.

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

The next section outlines OAC's broader support for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities from 2010 to 2017. It includes AODA compliance as well as achievements in removing and preventing barriers.

2010

OAC established the Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Committee (DDAAC), an internal committee to champion accessibility. The DDAAC raises the profile of accessibility for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities internally, and undertakes specific activities to increase awareness, such as staff learning sessions, presentations and attendance at Deaf and disability arts events.

OAC's compliance measures include:

- Ensuring that all staff who join the OAC receive training on the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation and how to communicate with people who are Deaf or have disabilities within their first two weeks of employment. Refresh training is available for existing employees.
- Using language in its procurement documents, whenever a formal process for procurement is used, that ensures agents, contracted services and consultants receiving and responding to OAC's procurement process are aware of OAC's accessibility requirements under the AODA.
- Informing the public of their options to receive information and services in alternate formats.
- Using a public feedback form that asks about experiences with accessibility and how OAC can provide more accessible service. OAC acts on that feedback to improve its accessibility practices.
- Welcoming people who are Deaf or who have disabilities who use assistive devices, support people or service animals, and training staff on assistive devices available in our facilities.

- Paying for the time and travel expenses for support persons when they are required for OAC-sponsored meetings, consultations, events or information sessions. Payments are issued in accordance with government travel and hospitality guidelines.
- Striving to ensure that all services are provided in accessible locations.
- Posting notices at all public entrances to OAC premises if there is a disruption to the facilities or services usually accessed by Deaf people or people with disabilities. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice is also provided on outgoing messages and on the OAC website.
- Ensuring that any new policies regarding customer service are created with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity in mind.

2011

- In 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 who shared their perspectives on their arts practice and career development. The event was also an opportunity for networking and relationship-building among artists, arts organizations and funding agencies.

2012

In 2012, OAC met a number of requirements under the IASR. The organization's compliance achievements included:

- 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.

- Developing individualized workplace emergency response plans: OAC employees were asked to inform Human Resources of any accommodation requirements in order to create individualized workplace emergency response information for Deaf employees or 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 are reviewed and revised if needed, particularly when the employee moves to a different location and when OAC reviews its emergency policies and procedures. OAC distributes intranet message reminders annually to ensure that all employees who need accommodations are aware and also includes it as a part of the enrolment process during orientation.
- Providing information about accommodations: 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

The Ontario Arts Council's accessibility measures for 2013 included:

- Developing and publishing accessibility policies for how the organization will meet its requirements under the Customer Service, Employment, and Information and Communications IASR standards.
- Developing and releasing OAC's first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2013-2017. The plan outlined the accessibility goals and milestones for the years ahead. It was developed after OAC reviewed legislative requirements under the IASR, developed strategies to meet each requirement and consulted with the public.
- Reviewing 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; in that case, OAC records the explanation upon request.

- Providing training to current staff (including management) and board members on the IASR and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it relates to Deaf persons and persons with disabilities, and training new staff and board members when they join the organization.
- Formalizing OAC's current employment practices into policies to address the requirements under the Employment Standard and sharing these with all employees.
- Modifying OAC employment letters and performance management forms to reflect policies for employment accommodation and providing an annual opportunity for employees and managers to discuss Deaf- and disability-related accommodation needs.
- Creating a list of accommodation supports and resources that staff can use when requests arise for alternative formats or information.
- Providing feedback processes, like surveys and feedback forms, in alternate formats to individuals upon request and notifying the public that alternate formats are available.
- Accommodating an increased number of requests for information in alternate formats, predominantly for American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ) interpreters to attend information/feedback meetings with OAC staff about its granting programs. OAC provided these services at no cost to the requester.
- Holding focus groups with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities to gather input on the draft Equity Plan and providing an ASL video of the draft plan. The OAC Board of Directors approved the final Equity Plan in October 2013.
- Publishing its first annual report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2013-2017.

2014

The Ontario Arts Council's accessibility measures for 2014 included:

- Making Deaf artists and artists with disabilities a priority group in the new strategic plan, *Vital Arts and Public Value: A Blueprint for 2014-2020*.

- Creating information videos on ways Deaf artists and artists with disabilities can engage and receive support from the Ontario Arts Council. The videos also highlighted Deaf artists and artists with disabilities describing how they have been supported through OAC's granting processes. The videos incorporate ASL and LSQ, as well as enhanced captioning.
- Adding Tangled Art + Disability, an arts organization, as a third-party recommender for exhibition assistance grants.
- Commissioning 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, OAC held a professional development session for staff where Tangled Art + Disability spoke to the history of Deaf and disability arts in Canada. Deaf artists and artists with disabilities also spoke about creating work, the Deaf and disability arts milieu and challenges such as the impact of arts grants on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments.
- Introducing a fund for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities that provides up to \$500 annually when support is required to complete an application.
- Continuing to provide communication vehicles such as surveys, feedback forms and information sessions in alternate formats to individuals upon request, and notifying the public that alternate formats are available.
- Ensuring that any documents associated with grant applications that are posted online are available in accessible formats upon request.
- Using accessible venues for public sessions arranged for and hosted by OAC and ensuring that ASL interpreters were in attendance.

2015

Most of OAC's requirements under the AODA were met in 2013 and 2014. In 2015, 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's specific accomplishments in 2015 included:

- Continuing to provide information in accessible formats and communication supports for Deaf people and people with disabilities, such as ASL interpretation for meetings with Deaf artists. 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.
- Publicizing the availability of alternate accessible formats in grant applications and guidelines.
- Launching a fund that allows Deaf artists and artists with disabilities who apply for a grant in any OAC project program to include accessibility expenses incurred in the course of creating, producing and realizing a project, in addition to the grant amount requested. This covers accessibility costs for an applicant who is Deaf or has a disability as well as other professional artists who are Deaf or have a disability and who are involved in the project.
- Appointing Tangled Art + Disability (already an external third-party recommender for the Exhibition Assistance granting program) 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.
- Creating the Media Arts Projects Access Initiative as a pilot initiative to assist not-for-profit, artist-run centres funded by the Media Arts department for projects that provide Deaf media artists and media artists with disabilities with training, professional development and production and post-production opportunities to assist in the creation of a media art work.
- Launching a Deaf and Disability Arts Projects pilot program to fund creation, production, professional development and skill-building opportunities for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
- Launching a program in which Deaf artists and artists with disabilities working in the visual arts or craft can apply for funding from the Materials and Supplies Assistance program, which provides grants of up to \$500 to cover the cost of buying materials and supplies.

- Continuing to have Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on our peer assessment panels, arranging and paying for the appropriate accommodations to facilitate full participation.

2016

There were no new requirements under the AODA for 2016. However, OAC continued to comply with existing requirements and achieved several important accessibility objectives, which included:

- Building and launching a new accessible website that meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA, which is an international standard of web content accessibility. In doing so, OAC met this standard in advance of the AODA's 2021 compliance deadline and created a website that is more user-friendly to a wider group of visitors.
- Developing relationships with suppliers of alternate formats and ASL interpretation services both independently and through the Ontario Public Service, and working with these vendors to accommodate these requests in a timely manner.
- Moving to a new office location that is fully accessible for visitors and employees. OAC ensured all individual evacuation and emergency procedure plans for staff requiring accommodations were reviewed and updated accordingly.
- Providing training to staff on creating accessible documents.
- Launching NOVA, OAC's new online and accessible granting system, with the goal of making the application process more accessible to all Ontarians.
- Developing accommodation policies for people using NOVA who may face barriers due to a disability or to technology access issues.
- Convening a Deaf and Disability Arts and 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 they faced in relation to OAC policies, programs and practices, from artists with relevant lived experiences and knowledge of the Deaf and disability arts field.

- Expanding 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.
- Conducting professional development and networking sessions for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on accessing grants and creating work.
- Holding the first assessment panel for the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program in which all applications from Deaf applicants were assessed by a panel of Deaf arts professionals.
- Continuing for a second year the pilot project to help make artist-run media arts production centres more accessible to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

- Supporting the production of “good news stories” that profile the achievements of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in Ontario.

2017

In 2017, the Ontario Arts Council continued to comply with its requirements under the AODA and undertook a number of accessibility-related initiatives, which included:

- Refining its inclusive application policy and process to improve the way in which OAC receives and responds to accommodation requests.
- Beginning to develop an assessor accommodation policy to support assessors in their duties for OAC.
- Holding 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 that Deaf artists face.

- Convening further meetings of its Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group and continuing to collect feedback from Deaf artists and artists with disabilities on how OAC policies, programs and services impact the community.
- Consulting with the Deaf community on developing a sign language interpretation policy for OAC.
- Partnering with the Deaf Culture Centre and Small Language Connections on a grant writing training and mentorship program for Deaf artists.
- Supporting the production of an information booklet on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and arts grants by the community-led ODSP and Arts Committee.
- Developing its next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2018 to 2021 with input and feedback from the OAC Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group as well as its Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Committee.
- Submitting a report to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario confirming the organization's compliance with the AODA.

OAC's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2018-2021

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the OAC must maintain a current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines what steps the organization will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and meet Ontario's accessibility laws, and the timeframe in which it will do so. The plan states the steps for achieving the legislated accessibility requirements as applicable to OAC's business and status as a large public sector organization under the IASR: the General Requirements, the Customer Service Standard, the Information and Communications 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 are not covered in its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

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

OAC's updated Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines 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 the organization's work, such as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the OAC Equity Plan.

If any new standards come into effect that impact the OAC's work, 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 to 2021, the period of time covered by this plan, OAC takes on business practices that expand its requirements under the IASR, OAC will revise the plan accordingly.

How OAC arrived at this plan: Our process

- The Ontario Arts Council reviewed its legislative requirements under the AODA and noted that compliance had been reached, including the one requirement regarding the level of website accessibility that would come into effect for OAC in 2021.
- OAC listened to suggestions from the Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group. Their recommendations form the majority of the elements in the plan.
- OAC's Equity, Diversity and 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 and Access Advisory Group for feedback.
- The final plan was approved by the OAC directors on November 14, 2017, and was 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 the organization has met its 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. OAC will also report on annual accessibility achievements in the Ontario Arts Council Annual Report.
- **Feedback review:** OAC will monitor and evaluate any feedback received throughout the year related to accessibility and integrate this information into the annual accessibility report. Any comments about OAC accomplishments and plans will be welcome and will be used in ongoing accessibility planning.
- **Regular reporting:** OAC will provide regular reports to OAC's Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group at twice-annual meetings. OAC actively solicits the group's feedback and takes their direction on relevant issues.

- **Data collection:** OAC will collect voluntary self-identification data on priority groups through granting application forms. OAC will report on the status of its 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:** OAC will revise the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan when supported by public feedback, recommendations from the Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group, and OAC's own accessibility action and planning processes. OAC will comply with the timelines and requirements of the IASR and explain why it has made changes or if certain commitments have not been met. Any revisions will be available on OAC's website and will be provided in alternate formats on request.

OAC's Detailed Plan: Strategies and Milestones

The details below document OAC's annual plans for achieving the legislated accessibility requirements as applicable under AODA's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), which include the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Accessible Information and Communications Standard and the Accessible Employment Standard. Only the IASR requirements that apply to OAC 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" that details OAC's 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 this organization in 2010. OAC will continue to:

- Provide new employees and volunteers with accessible customer service training. Refresh training is available for existing employees and volunteers.

- Provide communication supports or use alternative forms of communicating with individuals as requested, such as ASL/LSQ interpretation, in-person or Skype meetings, Video Relay Service (VRS) 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, OAC provides these options for communication and takes their direction on communication preferences.
- Inform applicants and other stakeholders of the options available for receiving information and services in alternate formats.
- Include language in its procurement documents, whenever a formal process for procurement is used, that ensures agents, contracted services and consultants receiving and responding to OAC's procurement process are aware of OAC's accessibility requirements under the AODA.
- Welcome Deaf people and people with disabilities who use assistive devices, support people or service animals, and train staff on assistive devices in OAC 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.

- Gather feedback on the goods and services OAC provides, and act on that feedback to improve services to Deaf people and people with disabilities. Feedback is collected through an online public feedback form, the assessment process, 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. OAC responds to complaints promptly and in the format requested.
- Strive to ensure that all its services are provided in accessible locations.
- Post appropriate notices regarding service disruptions to accessible services.
- Review and amend the Accessible Customer Service Policy as required.
- Ensure that 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 the following: 2018

- 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, which 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 resources specifically for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities about how to write grants in Nova. These resources could include 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 organizations that spread information about OAC programs and accessibility supports, connect applicants to accessibility supports service providers, help applicants with writing grants and distribute 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.

Information and Communications Standard

When hosting a meeting or event at a venue other than OAC offices, OAC will continue to ensure that the venues are barrier-free and that the venue's emergency procedures and accessibility features are communicated, as well as any accommodations OAC/the venue will have to put in place. If there are varying levels of accessibility at an event or meeting, OAC will let the public know, in alternate formats, as required.

OAC has established a list of Toronto venues that meet a minimum standard of accessibility. OAC will work with Deaf participants or participants with disabilities to meet accommodation needs at OAC events and in any emergency situation. OAC will make communications supports available at meetings and events upon request.

OAC will continue to ensure all feedback processes are accessible to Deaf persons and persons with disabilities, such as through the Public Feedback Form on our accessible website, 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 it notifies the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. The Executive Office will collect feedback and 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 Deaf people or 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 it can supply.

OAC will continue to share information about the availability of alternate formats and communication supports with the public.

OAC will be proactive in informing people about developments relating to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

OAC is committed to the following:

2018

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Develop an ASL/LSQ interpretation policy in consultation with interpreters and the Deaf community. This policy will cover OAC's public communications and public events such as meetings, receptions and assessment panels.
- Translate key portions of the grant application form into ASL/LSQ and make it available on the OAC website. Other portions of OAC's grant applications may be offered in ASL/LSQ upon request.
- Develop a budget that reflects the demand for ASL/LSQ videos.
- Strive to represent a greater diversity of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in the images, videos and resources on its website.
- 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 when determining the criteria for eligible suppliers and will provide feedback on the quality of accessible products/services.

- Commit to using only accessible venues for public events.
- Explore developing an internal tool and identifying one or more roles and related processes for coordinating accessible format conversions, ensuring quality control, and determining how accessibility support services are produced or provided.

2019

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Undertake an initiative whereby the 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 corporate communications.
- Strive for ASL/LSQ signed applications from Deaf individuals to be assessed by Deaf individuals.

- Include more ASL/LSQ content on the OAC website, such as the core content for OAC granting programs, information on the assessment process and how to make an application to OAC.
- Strive to increase the representation of the diversity of Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in the images, videos and resources on its website.
- Improve the process used to collate feedback to ensure that this information informs planning processes around accessibility.

2020

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Investigate Deaf arts and/or disability arts organizations that can be added as new third-party recommenders.
- Consult with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities about the OAC website and Nova, its online granting system, with a particular interest in how accessible technology like screen readers interact with the system.

- Create a publicly available toolkit on applying to grants using Nova and the accompanying assessment process. This will be accessible and will include ASL/LSQ content and examples of completed applications. It will be distributed through targeted outreach and communications.
- Implement an internal tool and identify one or more roles and related processes for coordinating accessible format conversions and accessibility support services, based on the exploration of this initiative conducted in 2018.

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 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 commitments related to accessible information and communications.

Employment Standard

OAC will continue to notify 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 policies.

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

- Information on support for Deaf employees and employees with disabilities, including providing employment-related accommodations;
- Accessible formats and communication supports that employees require to do their jobs and to receive information that is 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;

- Accessible options for training and education in situations where an employee is unable to attend a 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 required 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; 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 the following:

2018

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Conduct a staff self-identification survey. OAC recognizes the value of having staff that self-identify as Deaf or as having a disability. This representation is important in order to be inclusive and welcoming to diverse communities.

- Include ASL and LSQ fluency as an asset or a requirement in job descriptions for roles that serve the public.
- Diversify its job postings to networks, organizations, social media accounts and service providers that have strong connections to Deaf and disability communities.
- Explore using language in its recruitment communications (e.g. job postings and/or on the employment section of the website) that expresses OAC's commitment to accessibility, encourages more Deaf people or 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, and lists the types of accommodations available in the hiring process. OAC will plan accordingly to provide appropriate modifications to the process.
- 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 to 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. This procurement policy includes the requirement to explain OAC's decision in any case where it was not 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 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 other 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 Deaf people and people with disabilities. These include 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, 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 Deaf people and people with disabilities, such as training on communicating with people experiencing mental health crises, Deaf arts and cultural sensitivity training, general equity and access training, and accessible communication when administering accessibility support funds.

OAC is committed to the following:

2018

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Provide training to staff on the ethics of partnership and cultural appropriation as relating to Deaf and disability arts.
- 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

The Ontario Arts Council 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.

- Create a plan for refresh training on the Accessibility Regulations for employees, volunteers and board members.
- 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

- The Ontario Arts Council 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. Among these, the Ontario Arts Council 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.
- Have a Deaf and Disability Arts and Access Advisory Group. This group was established to gather feedback from artists with relevant lived experiences and knowledge of the Deaf and disability arts field on issues and developments in the Deaf and disability arts community, as well as the barriers they face, in relation to OAC policies, programs and practices.
- Offer accessibility support funds for making an application and covering the accessibility costs associated with carrying out a project.
- Provide designated funding programs for Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.

OAC is committed to the following: 2018

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Move funding for the Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program into its base budget.
- Ensure relevant staff have knowledge of Deaf and disability arts as a discipline and sector and understand the unique characteristics, contributions, issues, barriers and needs in the field by providing ongoing learning and educational opportunities, such as panels and formal training.
- 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.
- Review and report on its level of support to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities through granting programs.
- Increase its outreach to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and the organizations that serve such communities to ensure awareness of all granting programs.

2019

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Provide accessibility funds for arts organizations that are not Deaf- or disability-led but are working with Deaf artists and artists with disabilities in order to contribute 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.
- Explore forms of designated funding programs to increase support to Deaf artists and artists with disabilities.
- 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 international collaboration and connection with other Deaf and disability arts practitioners.

2020

The Ontario Arts Council 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' training on accessibility in the arts and related best practices.

2021

The Ontario Arts Council will:

- Include an accessibility expenses budget line in its project and operating grant applications and include accessibility questions in its grant applications.
- 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 an annual accessibility report on the progress of accessibility initiatives and will publish it on the OAC website.

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

OAC will update its policies and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan if it takes on business practices that expand applicable requirements under the IASR, as well as in response to any feedback received through monitoring and accountability processes.

OAC will prepare a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2022 and onward if required by the AODA. Alternatively, this plan may take another form by being integrated into the Ontario Arts Council Equity Plan or the next Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

The Ontario Arts Council recognizes that accessibility is an iterative process that shifts and expands with ongoing participation and feedback from the public. As such, OAC welcomes Deaf people and people with disabilities to be part of the process as active participants over the next four years of this plan, and beyond.

OAC will communicate progress once a year to ensure that the public knows how the organization has delivered on its commitments and any changes made to the plan. The plan and related annual updates will be posted on the OAC website. Our goal is to create and maintain an integrated plan built on feedback and to be accountable to those who apply for grants from the OAC and use our services.

In supporting the broader arts community to become more inclusive and accessible, OAC 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. OAC is committed to supporting Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and building a more accessible arts culture, recognizing that these efforts will lead to a more inclusive, dynamic and vital arts community in Ontario.

OAC Welcomes Feedback

You can provide feedback on this plan and its capacity to meet the needs of individuals who are Deaf or individuals with disabilities by contacting:

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