

## GETTING STARTED

### WHAT IS THE AODA?

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) is provincial legislation applying to all organizations with one or more employees. The *Act* currently has five standards in effect: Customer Service; Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; and Design of Public Spaces.

### THE AODA PROJECT

The AODA project focuses on educating businesses about their requirements under the *Act*, the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, and the resources available through EARN. The AODA Project catchment area is Ottawa and surrounding areas including Renfrew and Lanark Counties. The AODA Project will be delivered through Partnership Coordinators who will work one-on-one with businesses and business owners to collaborate with business associations, networks, service agencies, and sector tables with respect to the project focus. This flagship project will be the foundation for expansion into other districts, with the goal of unification and support in project initiatives province-wide at the forefront. The AODA Project is led by United Way, in partnership with and funded by, the Government of Ontario.

### EARN AND THE AODA PROJECT

The AODA Project works hand-in-hand with EARN, in order to best provide education and resources to businesses and employers with respect to AODA requirements, tools, services, and assistance. Through EARN membership, businesses can ensure current continuing education, toolkits, newsletters, hiring resources, and community involvement opportunities.

### HOW AODA PARTNERSHIP COORDINATORS HELP YOU

AODA Partnership Coordinators provide education on the requirements for businesses under the AODA and help employers to access the untapped talent pool of Ontarians with disabilities. Coordinators also provide resources and tools in order for businesses to become compliant and maintain inclusive practices under the *Act*. Coordinators will liaise with EARN in order to provide businesses with network membership which will benefit them in continuing education, networking opportunities, and the hiring of persons with disabilities

### THE AODA PROJECT AND THE UNITED WAY LANARK COUNTY

The United Way Lanark County is an organization that cares about its community. It is dedicated to improving lives and building community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action. In partnership with EARN, the United Way Lanark County is leading this AODA initiative throughout Lanark County and Smiths Falls, in an effort to work towards an inclusive, barrier free and accessible community.

## THE BENEFITS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Become compliant with AODA legislation
- Have access to free tools, education, and resources regarding the AODA and EARN
- Gain business and increase sales through valuing the needs of Ontarians with disabilities
- Promote your brand while positively impacting your community
- Learn the business benefits of hiring persons with disabilities
- Become aware of networks and services available to you through EARN
- Participate in community-wide collaboration and equal access opportunities for all

## INTRODUCING THE AODA STANDARDS:

You need to complete all requirements for the five standards; upcoming requirements are outlined in blue. Below are some of the key activities to complete with links to Government of Ontario resources. Some deadlines have passed so now is the time to act!

**Great Tip:** [www.accessforward.ca](http://www.accessforward.ca) has free online training modules on all the standards and general requirements; this site was developed in partnership with the Government of Ontario.

### 1. Customer Service (Not-For-Profits & Business with 1 or more employees)

When	What	How	Resources
Jan 1, 2012	Provide accessible customer service	Train staff & volunteers	<a href="http://www.accessforward.ca">www.accessforward.ca</a> online training module
Dec 31, 2014	File compliance report (20+ employees)	Use ministry template	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/completing-your-accessibility-compliance-report">https://www.ontario.ca/page/completing-your-accessibility-compliance-report</a>
Jan 1, 2014	Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (50+ employees)	Use ministry resources	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy">https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy</a>
Jan 1, 2015	Create accessibility policies	Use ministry template	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-create-accessibility-policies">https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-create-accessibility-policies</a>
Jan 1, 2015	Self-Service Kiosks	Consult ministry info	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-self-service-kiosks-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-self-service-kiosks-accessible</a>
Jan 1, 2016	Train staff on accessibility laws	See training tips	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-train-your-staff-accessibility">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-train-your-staff-accessibility</a>
Jan 1, 2016	Make it easy to give feedback	Surveys, comment cards	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-train-your-staff-accessibility">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-train-your-staff-accessibility</a>

**2. Information and Communications (Not-For-Profits & Business with 1 or more employees)**

<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Jan 1, 2012	Provide accessible emergency & public safety information	Use the ministry template	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-provide-emergency-information-accessible-employees">https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-provide-emergency-information-accessible-employees</a>
Jan 1, 2014	Make websites accessible, 50+ employees	Use ministry resources	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible</a>
Jan 1, 2016	Make your public information accessible when asked, 20+ employees	There are tips and ideas to get you started	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible</a>
Jan 1, 2017	Make your public information accessible when asked, 1 – 19 employees	Same as above	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible</a>
Jan 1, 2021	Make all websites & website content accessible, 50+ employees	This page has a list: how to comply, tips, best practices	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-information-accessible</a>

### 3. Employment (Not-For-Profits & Business with 1 or more employees)

When	What	How	Resources
Jan 1, 2012	Create individual workplace emergency response info for employees with disabilities	Download free template	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-provide-emergency-information-accessible-employees">https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-provide-emergency-information-accessible-employees</a>
Jan 1, 2016	Make your employment practices accessible, 50+ employees	Use the tips and step by step process laid out on these pages	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces">https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces</a>
Jan 1, 2017	Make your employment practices accessible, 1 – 49 employees	Same as above	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces">https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces</a>

- This standard builds on existing requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Code to accommodate employees with disabilities to the point of undue hardship.
- Your Partnership Coordinator can help you determine the meaning of undue hardship as it applies to your business.

#### Here are some tips on making your recruitment and employee support practices more accessible and compliant with employment standard requirements:

- Include a statement that you are an equal opportunity employer in all job postings and that accommodations can be made during interviews.
- Discuss accommodation needs with all new hires as a best practice.
- Provide workplace information and communications, individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities, and return-to-work processes for employees who have been absent due to a disability in an accessible format (e.g. large print, e-format, etc).

### 4. Transportation (Not-For-Profits & Business with 1 or more employees)

The requirements of the Transportation Standard apply to transportation providers as well as municipalities, universities, colleges, hospitals and school boards, with requirements that vary based on the type of transportation provider. This Standard does not usually apply to businesses and not-profits.

## 5. Design of Public Spaces (Not-For-Profits & Business with 1 or more employees)

When	What	How	Resources
Jan 1, 2017	Make new or redeveloped public spaces accessible, 50+ employees	Consult the ministry resources	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible</a> <a href="http://www.accessforward.ca">www.accessforward.ca</a> online training module
Jan 1, 2018	Make new or redeveloped public spaces accessible, 1 – 49 employees	Same as above	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible">https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible</a> <a href="http://www.accessforward.ca">www.accessforward.ca</a> online training module

### How to File a Compliance Report

Dec 31, 2017 Dec 31, 2020	3 Easy Steps to File a compliance report (20+ employees)	Use ministry template	<a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/completing-your-accessibility-compliance-report">https://www.ontario.ca/page/completing-your-accessibility-compliance-report</a>
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### WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act uses the same definition of disability as the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- The definition covers many different types of disability, such as:
  - Deafness or hearing loss
  - Intellectual or developmental disabilities
  - Learning disabilities
  - Mental health disabilities
  - Physical disabilities
  - Vision loss

- A disability can be permanent – affecting someone for their entire lives – or it can be temporary, like having a broken leg.
- We often think of disability as someone who uses a wheelchair because we have been exposed to that image ... keep in mind that 70% of disabilities are invisible and that means that you may have an employee or a customer with a disability and you may not know it.

Here are more resources to get you started on creating an accessible workplace.

### 1. Create Leadership Buy-In:

- **Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities**  
[http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking\\_disabilities.shtml](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.shtml)  
<http://www.diversityjournal.com/13968-disabilities-13968/>  
<http://earn-paire.ca/>
- **Expand Your Definition of Diversity and Inclusion**  
 People with disabilities are also part of a diverse workforce. About 1 in 7 people in Ontario have some form of disability and this number is expected to grow. Inclusive recruitment strategies ensure employers have access to an educated, motivated and talented pool of potential employees. Intersectionality between different equity groups can happen too. For example someone with a disability may also be a woman, a visible minority, a member of the LGBTQ community, etc. A diverse and inclusive workforce benefits everyone.

### 2. Review Your HR Practices:

- **Employment Standards (AODA)**  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>  
<http://accessforward.ca/>  
<http://www.theaccessibilityhub.ca/the-aoda/>  
<https://www.hrpa.ca/for-the-public/accessibility-resources>
- **Is Your Hiring Process Inclusive?**  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7159>  
<http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-recruitment.cfm>  
<http://inclusionnl.ca/inclusive-workplaces/hiring-practices/>
- **Are Your On-Boarding Practices Inclusive & Accommodating?**  
 Conference Board of Canada Toolkit (Chapter 4)  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7159>  
[https://www.hrpa.ca/for-the-public/disability-management-\(nidmar\)](https://www.hrpa.ca/for-the-public/disability-management-(nidmar))

### 3. Create an Inclusive Culture within Your Organization:

- **HR Council**  
<http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-supportive-environment.cfm>
- **Graybridge Malkam Diversity Mentoring**  
<http://graybridgemalkam.com/courses-workshops/diversity-inclusion/diversity-mentoring>
- **Human Resources Professional Association**  
<https://www.hrpa.ca/for-the-public/mental-health-resources>
- **Disrupting Unconscious Bias**  
<http://graybridgemalkam.com/courses-workshops/diversity-inclusion/unconscious-bias-understanding-our-brains-processes-bias>  
<http://graybridgemalkam.com/resources/white-paper-unconscious-bias>

### 4. Connect to Local Resources for Ongoing Talent Needs:

- **Customized Recruitment Activities and Events Through EARN and Service Providers Who Can Support Your Talent Needs:**  
<http://earn-paire.ca/>

### 5. Understand That The Journey Continues:

- **Don't Wait For The Perfect Position**  
Companies often say they are committed to hiring people with disabilities when they can identify the right roles or when they are 'ready'. There's no particular area where a person with a disability can work. From CEO to mailroom, there are as many roles as there are people. If you are reading this document – your organization **IS** ready! If you are attending this event today, your organization **IS** ready! Jump In!
- **Think Outside The Elevator**  
Corporations often believe that accessible entrances, ramps and elevators determine inclusivity. But only 6% of the disability community actually uses a wheelchair or scooter. Many people require no accommodation at all; inclusion starts with changing attitudes. Continue to ask your organization: How are we doing? Where are our gaps? Celebrate Successes! Look for creative solutions. Engage, network and become part of organizations that will lead you to where the talent is – Organizations like EARN!

## 6. Use Tools and Resources:

- **Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN)**  
<http://earn-paire.ca/>
- **Canadian Business SenseAbility**  
<https://www.senseability.ca/>
- **Conference Board of Canada Toolkit**  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7159>
- **ODEN**  
<http://odenetwork.com/>
- **AODA**  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>

## ONTARIO GOVERNMENT CONTACTS



ontario.ca/accessibility



Toll-Free: 1-866-515-2025  
TTY: 416-325-3408 / 1-800-268-7095



@ONAccessibility



Facebook.com/AccessON



AccessOntario



accessibility@ontario.ca



**Funding Sources to make your business more physically accessible to customers and employees with disabilities:**

- **EnAbling Accessibility Fund (EAF)** – a federal grant program  
<http://www.edsc.gc.ca/eng/disability/eaf/index.shtml>
- **The Stop Gap Foundation** – affordable temporary ramps  
<http://www.stopgap.ca>

**REMEMBER: An AODA Partnership Coordinator can help you get started too!**

**Contact:**

**Amy Elsner**, AODA Partnership Coordinator

United Way Lanark County

E-Mail: [aelsner@lanarkunitedway.com](mailto:aelsner@lanarkunitedway.com)

Telephone: 1 (613) 253-9074

Website: [www.lanarkunitedway.com](http://www.lanarkunitedway.com)

*“The number-one barrier to inclusive employment is attitude.”*

Mark Wafer, Tim Horton’s Franchise Owner, Disability Rights Advocate, Race Car Driver, Policy Change Instigator