

Coordinated Accessibility Strategy Annual Report 2022-2023

Presented to the Board of Governors

**Accessibility Institute (formerly Research, Education, Accessibility and Design
(READ) Initiative)
April 24, 2023**

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From the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy Implementation Team

Carleton University continues to lead from a place of service and commitment, encouraging us to acknowledge the humanity in all of us and, by doing so, make space for recognition, understanding and compassion.

Our committed community working on the implementation of the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy (CAS) continues to evolve. In fall 2022, Carleton realized a goal ten years in the making with the establishment of the Accessibility Institute (formerly the Research, Education, Accessibility, and Design (READ) Initiative). From a CAS point of view, we have 25 action-based groups working on specific projects. Progress on this implementation is a direct result of a dedicated group of more than 40 people across all aspects of campus life whose creativity and innovative mindsets are advancing the needle on accessibility at Carleton. In the following pages, we share the highlights for each area of focus. It is important to recognize that while presented more linearly, the reality is that there are interrelated aspects across focus areas, creating ripples across the continuum of the strategy.

The CAS is approaching its third anniversary. We continue to reflect, listen, and learn as a community what is working and what needs to be improved. We will also continue to engage the community as an essential step so that Carleton continues to be a place where people of all abilities have the choice and agency to engage fully in all aspects of campus life.

On behalf of the CAS implementation team and the teams advancing our strategy, thank you for your continued advocacy and leadership for a more accessible world.

To our continued success,



Cathy Malcolm Edwards
CAS Implementation Lead

Executive Summary

Carleton University's [Coordinated Accessibility Strategy \(CAS\)](#) officially launched in June 2020 under the guidance of the four Vice-Presidents of the institution. Through the cross-representational Steering Committee, the first phase of implementation brought together diverse voices and perspectives to draft proposed action plans. This past year, the CAS has continued in an action phase, with projects underway across the university. Each project ensures that the voices of lived/living experience guide the path forward. There is also an intention for equitable representation that reflects the diversity of our campus community.

The CAS implementation team continues to make progress towards its [intermediary outcomes](#), such as internal recognition of accessibility as part of our culture, embedded in roles and with greater representation. The team is also working with units on campus to support policy reviews and improved employment and employee support. These outcomes are the result of continued consultations and feedback from the Carleton community, and this report will outline specific actions taken in service of these outcomes in each of the CAS areas of focus.

Over the past year, 7 recommendations are in the planning phase; 13 recommendations are underway; 16 recommendations have the status of continuous, meaning that key targets have been accomplished although work continues; and 4 recommendations are upcoming in the near-to-mid term (see [Appendix 1](#)). Since the launch of the CAS, definitive actions have been taken on 36 of the 40 recommendations.

This annual report is respectfully presented to the Board of Governors as part of the CAS's ongoing commitment to transparency within the Carleton community.

A note about language

It is essential to recognize the power of language. People self-determine how to express their identities. As such, some people identify with person-first language (e.g., people with disabilities), others use identity-first language (e.g., disabled person), and some may decide to use broader acknowledgement of the ability continuum (e.g., people with varying abilities). The emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) continues to evolve for the representation of those who have been marginalized by society. This acknowledgement is often expressed through language such as lived/living experience, which can acknowledge the multiple social identities any given person may have (e.g., gender, ethnicity/race, ability) and the intersection of them. While the CAS has adopted 'persons with disabilities' as its language, we have varied the language to create space where more people feel seen and represented.

Context

Carleton University strives to be an inclusive community. This aspiration allows us to form deeper connections with one another as we work through barriers of language, stigma, and biases. We are grateful to the land which supports us in this pursuit, the traditional and unsundered territory of the Algonquin people.

The following guiding principles continue to anchor implementation efforts for the strategy:

1. We collectively support accessibility for those with visible and non-visible disabilities, including cognitive, developmental, intellectual, medical, mental, physical, and sensory disabilities.
2. We commit to being flexible to support each individual's fullest participation in activities and society in any place, space, item or service, whether physical or virtual.
3. We recognize and work to address attitudinal and systemic barriers to inclusion.

In 2018, Carleton undertook a collaborative process to develop its first Coordinated Accessibility Strategy (CAS). After extensive consultations with the community, where an emphasis was placed on listening to and reflecting on experiences, seven areas of focus emerged, each with a set of objectives and recommendations. Collectively, these serve as pathways to a more accessible campus for all.

Continuing with a human-centred approach for the implementation of the CAS, the first year (2020-2021) centred on activities and efforts in planning the implementation of the strategy. Last year (2021-2022), more than 30 people in 15 units were actively engaged in action projects that will address elements in the overall system that require improvement. This year (2022-2023), more than 40 people across 20 units contributed to the details found in [Reporting Back](#) (Figure 1).

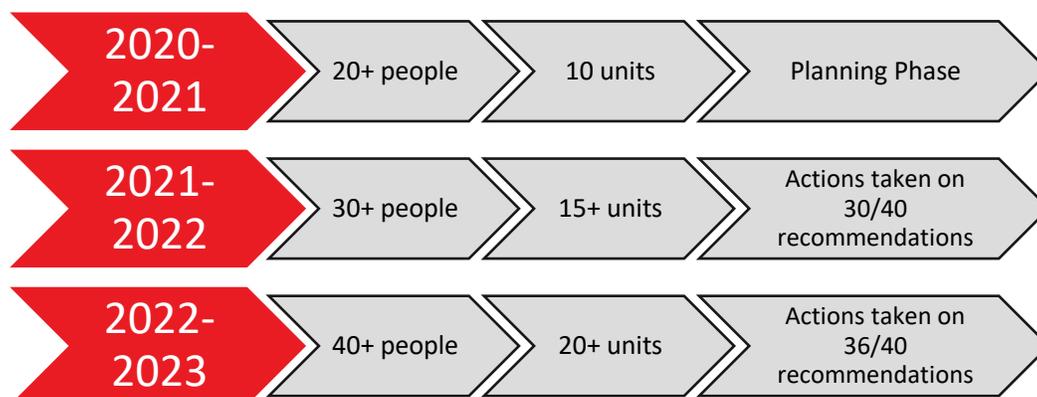


Figure 1 – Capacity and growth of CAS since inception

Governance

The Coordinated Accessibility Strategy (CAS) is governed by a distributed leadership team that is responsible for the overall coordination and leadership (Figure 2). The CAS Lead continues to interface with Executive Champions to ensure access and support to coordinate cross-functional initiatives. Activities are informed by the Theory of Change that was developed in 2021-2022 ([Appendix 2](#)).



Figure 2: Team supporting coordination and leadership

¹ CAS co-chairs

² Part-time student resources and alumni

³ Paul Menton Centre CAS Liaison

⁴ Access to staff members at the Institute for coordination and communications

Reporting Back - Highlights of Progress in the Areas of Focus

The following section provides an overview of the exceptional work led by more than 40 people, spanning 20 units on campus who are directly involved in CAS implementation. Note that each highlight and next step is mapped to a recommendation from the CAS. Please see [Appendix 1](#), which contains a table of all of the objectives and recommendations as outlined in the CAS per area and related status.

Area of Focus #1: Coordination and Leadership

The Research, Education, Accessibility and Design (READ) Initiative was launched in 2012 and celebrated its ten year anniversary in fall 2022. This celebration included recognition of the tremendous work over the past decade by acclaiming the unit as Carleton University's Accessibility Institute. The team continues to grow with core and project team members, all dedicated to accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities at Carleton and in the local, national, and global community. Since its inception as an independent department in 2018, the Institute has brought in \$11.5M in funding. The Institute is just one way that Carleton continues to promote an increased emphasis on areas of disability, accessibility, and inclusion.

Highlights:

- In fall 2021, a provincial committee sought feedback on proposed standards for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), specific to postsecondary institutions, to help make education more accessible for students with disabilities. In summer 2022, the participating units were contacted again regarding any progress made or barriers being faced regarding more accessible practices. This process helps us better understand the state of accessibility on campus and helps prepare us should a separate legislation come into effect for post-secondary institutions. ([Area of Focus 1, R.a](#))
- Work continues on Carleton's [accessibility landing page](#) in partnership with Web Services. Outcomes from focus groups in March 2023 involving those with living/lived experience will inform the continual accessible design of the site and inform more accessible university templates for the web. ([Area of Focus 1, R.a](#), [Area of Focus 3, R.d](#))
- Development of a workshop series that brings awareness to the power of language in challenging ableism as well as increase understanding about why accessibility matters. It has been delivered to leaders in the Accessibility Institute, Library, Residence Life (including student leaders), and students in the Research and Education in Accessibility, Design, and Innovation (READi) program. Also working with a team led by Adrian Chan to create accessibility training and awareness modules for use in engineering and design (pilot). ([Area of Focus 1, R.d](#))
- Our leadership continues to be reflected in the continued growth of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) with its national office at the Accessibility Institute.

CAN has brought 18 new Collaborator Organizations on-board, bringing the total number of CAN Collaborator Organizations up to 70. The Network launched the bi-monthly newsletter in May 2022, which has grown to a readership of over 400 individuals. Additionally, CAN launched four new Communities of Practice (Education & Training Community of Practice with 35 members; Employment Community of Practice with 34 members; Policy Community of Practice with 27 members; and Research, Design & Innovation Community of Practice with 37 members).

- Completed a review of the 158 policies at Carleton, of which 15 (9.5%) mention terms related to inclusion, including accessibility, representation, mental health, or minority populations. There are others that could perhaps benefit from a review through the lens of accessibility. This will be part of the work in 2023-24. (across the portfolio and [Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))

Area of Focus #2: Education and Training

Over the years, Carleton has committed to better practices as well as mobilizing knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In both formal academic programs and professional development training environments, the goal remains to educate instructors and the student population on how to make campus and campus life more accessible. Efforts in this focus area build on established practices on campus (e.g., Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training, universal design for learning, and web accessibility workshops).

Highlights:

- Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) has reviewed and included aspects of accessibility in digital tools and design in all existing programming. They have refocused workshops to stress the simple things that instructors can change for all students as well as developed a summer institute to be offered which embraces universal design for learning. ([Area of Focus 2, R.a](#))
- Reconvened monthly meetings for the TLS Accessibility Seekers Community of Practice. ([Area of Focus 2, R.c](#))
- The Experiential Learning Hub will involve a team of students who will receive broad training around accessibility. TLS, working with the Accessibility Institute and the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC), will advise on this process. ([Area of Focus 2, R.d](#))
- TLS, Facilities Management and Planning (FMP), Scheduling and Exam Services (SES), and the Accessibility Institute regularly review learning spaces across campus with the goal of improving and addressing accessibility concerns. Persons with disabilities are key partners. ([Area of Focus 2, R.d](#))

Area of Focus #3: Information and Communications

The release of the Carleton Digital Strategy solidifies that Carleton operates in two environments, one which is physical and one that is virtual. The commitment to accessibility in both environments remains paramount to the university. Below, we have captured several highlights that speak to leadership in this focus area.

Highlights:

- The communications and event guide is evolving to be a knowledge base co-managed by Conference Services and the Accessibility Institute. The knowledge base serves as a self-service library that can be expanded on as required. ([Area of Focus 3, R.b](#))
- Web Services have conducted approximately 40 scans over the past 18 months, scanning several thousand pages over this period. ([Area of Focus 3, R.a](#))
- Web Services completed new accessibility training modules and are advertising them widely via social media and other university channels. There are six larger modules, comprising approximately 20 lessons with completely revamped resources and new tutorial videos ([Area of Focus 3, R.d](#), [Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))
- Procurement Services, in close consultation with key stakeholders across campus, including the newly formed Accessible Procurement Advisory Group (APAG), has put into place the components for Accessible Procurement at Carleton. The soft launch will begin summer 2023. This includes updating the Procurement policy to include accessible procurement considerations. ([Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))

Area of Focus #4: Physical Campus

For most people, we do not really notice the built environment until it gets in our way. Carleton is fortunate to have a team of dedicated trained professionals working towards making campus as accessible as possible. By adopting the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Standard, as well as Brock University's accessibility design guidelines, Carleton continues to challenge its standard of excellence, which far exceeds compliance with codes and regulations.

Highlights:

- Campus Map Upgrades: With the release of the new Carleton Mobile app, there is an opportunity to upgrade the map feature by pulling from the existing data on the web. Additionally, with the investment in the Rick Hansen audits on campus, a process is being drafted to update the accessibility content for future iterations. Phase 1 of the project could enable the existing accessibility features in Banner to be used in the exams module of Carleton Mobile during the spring exam period. ([Area of Focus 4, R.a](#), [Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))

- Accessible Room Characteristics have been set up and are available in the Enterprise Space Portal. ([Area of Focus 4, R.a](#), [Area of Focus 4, R.b](#))

Area of Focus #5: Employment and Employee Support

While Carleton University is well known for being a leader in accessibility, the CAS highlights the need for further attention to services and supports for Carleton employees with visible and non-visible disabilities. More needs to be done for employees to address structural inequities that may exist inherently, particularly in our practices and processes.

Highlights:

- The leadership and management team in Human Resources is examining the current state of their services and supports and identifying gaps from the benchmarking project. As a first phase, the team is meeting with key advisors on campus to assess process and resources. ([Area of Focus 5, R.a](#))
- A policy framework is being developed that will be used to implement employment-related policy, including accessibility. ([Area of Focus 5, R.b](#))

Area of Focus #6: Student Support Services

Over the year, strides have been made to develop more supports for students not registered with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC), as well as for graduate students. Additionally, the teams behind both the implementation of the CAS and the recently updated Student Mental Health Framework (SMHF) continue to collaborate to support the mutual goal of a more inclusive campus.

Highlights:

- Services and support are now available to students who are not formally registered with PMC, including information meetings with a PMC coordinator for prospective and current members of the Carleton community, virtual support groups (ADHD, Graduate Writing, Anxiety), and the new graduate student series. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#))
- PMC conducted a survey of current graduate students that identified needs and gaps in services at the graduate level. The four main gaps identified were: more formal processes to support accommodation requests for outside of course specific accommodations, graduate funding, resources for supervisors who work with students with disabilities, and raising awareness of the PMC when grad students are accepting their offers of admission. Discussions with FGPA and other campus partners on how to address these gaps are ongoing. Currently PMC is offering increased graduate student programming and support in

response to the survey results. ([Area of Focus 6, R.b](#), [Area of Focus 6, R.c](#), [Area of Focus 6, R.e](#))

- The brand new Wellness Services Navigator has streamlined resource navigation for students by creating curated lists of resources, while the new Wellness website has been updated to better reflect the identified needs of our students based on the SMHF 2022-2026 consultations, including more accessible and transparent information. ([Area of Focus 6, R.d](#), [Area of Focus 6, R.e](#))

Area of Focus #7: Research and Development

Research plays a vital role in advancing inclusion in society. Carleton's research reputation continues to grow in parallel to its ongoing commitment to accessibility. In the last calendar year, more than \$2.97M in research funding was awarded representing areas such as transportation, employment, and neurodiversity. It is worth noting that many of the opportunities came from outreach to Carleton based on its reputation.

A key element for competitive graduate programs is the ability to attract research funding to support leading-edge, socially relevant projects. Since 2018, the university has attracted a minimum of approximately \$3M per year in research revenue for accessibility research. The ability to bring in consistent funding year over year demonstrates ongoing capacity in Carleton's research enterprise to support the training of students interested in accessibility-related research. This understanding is at the forefront of the continued work to develop the first-of-its-kind collaborative masters' specialization in Accessibility.

Highlights:

- The Accessibility Institute, along with its campus partners, has launched a project to conduct agile analysis to 1) explore what disciplines make up the field of accessibility and 2) understand how Carleton is positioned within the field. Collectively, the outputs will help identify the current and future states for the university in this emerging area and identify ways that the Accessibility Institute and the research enterprise at Carleton can support the excellence of the researchers on campus. ([Area of Focus 7, R.a](#), [Area of Focus 7, R.b](#), [Area of Focus 7, R.c](#))
- A new collaborative Master of Accessibility, with a commitment for a research chair, has been approved by Senate. The development team is led by Adrian Chan, Systems and Computer Engineering; Kelly Fritsch, Sociology and Anthropology; Vincent Kazmierski, Law and Legal Studies; and Boris Vukovic, Accessibility Institute and School of Industrial Design. ([Area of Focus 7, R.d](#), [Area of Focus 7, R.e](#))

What is next?

Over the next 12-18 months, the CAS implementation team will focus on progress towards intermediary outcomes that resulted from continued consultations and feedback from the Carleton community. It is critical that we collectively create opportunities for the campus community to identify with and recognize our culture of accessibility. We will continue to see accessibility embedded more formally in roles and in the policies that guide the institution.

Some specific activities that will support the outcomes include:

1. Creation of a roadmap for 2025 and beyond.
2. Completion of the physical campus audits. ([Area of Focus 4, R.b](#))
3. Working with senior leadership to explore ways to have accessibility embedded in roles and resources as a priority at all levels. ([Area of Focus 1, R.c](#))
4. Creation of accessibility and design training modules. ([Area of Focus 1, R.d](#))
5. Implementation of formal processes and policies for student supports for disabled graduate students. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#), [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#), [Area of Focus 6, R.c](#))
6. Development of supports and resources for accessible employment. ([Area of Focus 5](#))

"Carleton is extremely passionate about working towards making our community as accessible as possible...Not only does this make me a proud Carleton student but it makes me feel very welcome in the Carleton community."

Max LeMoine, Student Accessibility Champion

Appendix 1: Areas of Focus and Recommendations Status

This Appendix contains the Objectives and Recommendations directly outlined in the [Coordinated Accessibility Strategy \(CAS\)](#). A status column has been added with the following indicators:

- **Planning:** Activities (e.g., planning, coordination) have been initiated in the current reporting cycle.
- **Underway:** Activities are currently underway and being implemented.
- **Continuous:** Activities are complete, but implementation is an ongoing process with no definitive end date.
- **Upcoming:** Activities that are planned in the near-to-mid term.

The table below can be summarized as follows:

- 7 recommendations are in the planning phase,
- 13 recommendations are underway,
- 16 recommendations are considered in a continuous phase, and
- 4 recommendations are upcoming.

As recommendations are actioned, it is worth noting that the implementation is an ongoing process with no definitive end date. This is reflective of accessibility not being an end state but instead a continuous state of adaptation. Since the original launch of the CAS, definitive actions have been taken on 36 of the 40 recommendations.

Area of Focus #1. Coordination and Leadership

Recommendations	Status
a. Conduct a thorough environmental scan and create a living document of all accessibility initiatives at Carleton.	Continuous
b. Establish an interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence in Accessibility that provides leadership, coordination, best practices, research, support, training, and knowledge mobilization.	Continuous
c. Formalize the senior leadership responsibility for accessibility across the University's portfolios.	Upcoming
d. Increase depth of accessibility training of people in leadership positions.	Planning

e. Expand University-wide and community events and campaigns to increase awareness and foster a culture of accessibility.	Underway
f. Develop membership and contributions to accessibility partnerships, organizations, and consortium, partnering at the local, provincial, national, and global level.	Continuous
g. Establish a central resource to disseminate and receive information on accessibility.	Continuous

Area of Focus #2: Education and Training

Recommendations	Status
a. Increase the number of in-depth training opportunities in accessibility on campus that are relevant to different settings and exceed minimum requirements.	Underway
b. Increase the number of community activities that build greater awareness and understanding of accessibility and disabilities, barriers, and exclusion, as well as opportunities for change.	Continuous
c. Provide educators on campus with incentives, skills, and resources to consider accessibility in the design of academic activities and experiential learning, including the principles of universal design.	Planning
d. Include persons with disabilities and value their lived experiences as a source of knowledge in the design of teaching and learning.	Continuous
e. Expand interdisciplinary academic programming and professional development in accessibility and disabilities for members of the internal and external community.	Underway
f. Address issues of accessibility and disabilities within the Faculties and Departments and encourage faculty to utilize relevant teaching and learning services.	Planning

Area of Focus #3: Information and Communications

Recommendations	Status
a. Perform system audits for accessibility, driven by individual units.	Continuous
b. Establish process for support for providing accommodations, and adaptive and assistive devices for Carleton events.	Underway
c. Establish a reporting protocol to identify information and communication related accessibility barriers and areas for improvement.	Planning
d. Establish best practices for accessibility in all knowledge creation and sharing (e.g., documents, presentation, websites, social media, conferences), which are shared internally and externally.	Continuous
e. Provide guidelines and training opportunities on accessibility in knowledge creation and sharing for faculty and staff.	Continuous
f. Ensure accessibility to be part of the procurement requirements.	Underway

Area of Focus #4: Physical Campus

Recommendations	Status
a. Create a Carleton University standard for accessibility of physical spaces based on best practice guidelines and certifications that surpass minimum requirements.	Continuous
b. Perform a full accessibility audit of the physical campus with input from the campus community, particularly persons with disabilities.	Continuous
c. Undertake systematic retrofitting to address current problems and meet the new standards for the physical campus.	Planning
d. Establish a reporting protocol to identify accessibility barriers and areas for improvement.	Continuous
e. Establish a permanent University budget and related supporting resources for accessibility of physical spaces.	Upcoming

f. Review University policies and practices to consider accessibility where relevant to the physical campus.	Underway
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Area of Focus #5: Employment and Employee Support

Recommendations	Status
a. Institute effective processes and go-to resources on campus for disability-related accommodations and supports for employees across all levels and stages of employment.	Underway
b. Review and identify gaps in employment-related policies, practices, and training that support accessibility, accommodations, and disability-competent inclusion.	Continuous
c. Provide targeted opportunities across campus that promote career development and training for Carleton employees with disabilities.	Upcoming
d. Include employees with disabilities for input and participation to improve accessibility in employment for persons with disabilities.	Planning
e. Review Carleton's rates of employment of persons with disabilities and address gaps in representation where they exist.	Upcoming

Area of Focus #6: Student Support Services

Recommendations	Status
a. Optimize resources through accessibility lens to be responsive to the growing needs for accommodation and support of students with disabilities.	Continuous
b. Review and identify gaps in student services programming and delivery with consideration of both undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities.	Underway
c. Provide accessibility and disability-related training specific to different student services programs.	Underway

d. Build knowledge, awareness, and attitudes in accessibility and accommodations across all student-facing services and points of contact on campus.	Continuous
e. Establish formal student feedback and program evaluation protocols for disability-related student services for continuous quality improvement.	Underway

Area of Focus #7: Research and Development

Recommendations	Status
a. Develop a strategic plan for accessibility and disability research and knowledge mobilization (e.g., research informed campus initiatives).	Underway
b. Create a university-wide network of researchers in accessibility and disability.	Continuous
c. Grow the research capacity in accessibility and disability, including increasing the number and retention of researchers, research funding, research infrastructure, and community partnerships.	Underway
d. Pursue research chair(s) in accessibility and disability.	Planning
e. Establish academic programming to support research in accessibility and disability.	Underway

Appendix 2: Theory of Change Development

A small working group met in 2021-2022 to develop a theory of change for the CAS. A theory of change can be a valuable tool to guide the evaluation of complex, interwoven and interdependent outcomes, including leadership and cultural change. Represented as a logical process, the theory of change starts with desired change and then applies backwards design to determine what are the outcomes, outputs, and activities needed to achieve the desired change. Figure 1 shares the impact statement of the CAS, namely, that our community fully supports the inclusion and participation of all its members, regardless of ability. This commitment is the heartbeat of why the CAS exists and is supported by the intended outcomes of representation and engagement of living/lived experiences of disability that act as a catalyst for change both on campus and more broadly in society. An active community will create more fulsome, accessible experiences that collectively authenticate Carleton's position as a national and global leader.



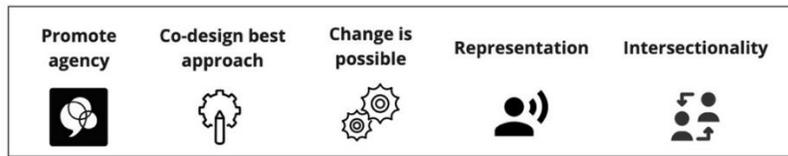
Figure 1: CAS impact and higher-order outcomes

Central to the theory of change is an acknowledgement of the pre-conditions needed for success and any assumptions being made. As per Figure 2, the assumptions carry over from the development of CAS, namely that:

- the approach continues to recognize the vital need for promotion of agency, co-design;
- acceptance that change is possible;
- representation of disabled people (also referred to as living/lived experience) is essential; and,
- The CAS implementation team recognizes the intersectionality of our identities.

The implementation of the CAS requires pre-conditions such as relationships and people, financial investment, accountability to commit and deliver, and lastly, strength in our community to be successful.

ASSUMPTIONS



PRE-CONDITIONS



Figure 2: Theory of Change Assumptions and Pre-conditions

It is also important to acknowledge the barriers and enablers to accomplishing our goals and objectives with the CAS, as expressed in Figure 1. Doing so helps set and manage expectations. Figure 3 represents some of the barriers to more accessible environments, both systemic in society and also specific to the Carleton environment. It is worth noting that impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and organization priorities are strongly interrelated; that is to say that the pandemic has played a heavy role in the capacity of units to prioritize activities and efforts for the CAS, though the commitment to accessibility has not diminished. This commitment is key to the enablers listed. Continually, the strength of our community is evident through collaborations, innovative thinking, and co-design approaches.

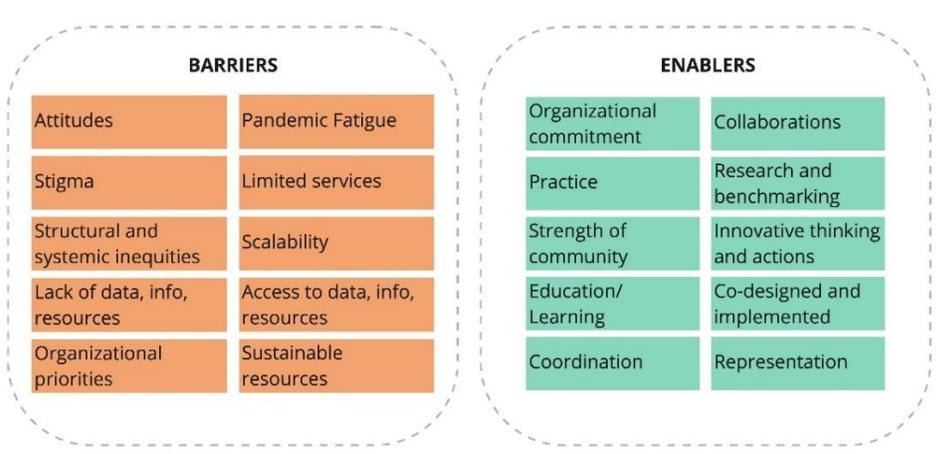


Figure 3: Barriers and Enablers for Theory of Change

The primary activities and nearer-term outputs act as the progress measures to meet the intermediary and longer-term outcomes associated with the CAS. These elements are documented in [Reporting Back](#).