KNOWLEDGE NETWORK CORPORATION

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2024-2027

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BRITISH COLUMBIA'S | Knowledge Network:

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1. <u>General</u>

i)   <u>Introduction</u>

Knowledge Network Corporation (Knowledge Network) is very pleased to publish its first Accessibility Plan for 2024-2027. It outlines our approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility in alignment with the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) and the *Accessible B.C. Act*. Knowledge Network strives to create an inclusive environment for our employees, filmmakers, engaged partners and B.C. audiences. We view this plan as the beginning of an ongoing journey regarding accessibility within our organization.

Knowledge Network is British Columbia's viewer supported public broadcaster and streamer. We provide British Columbians with trusted, free, and commercial-free content that enriches minds, fosters understanding, and contributes to a connected and more informed society. We offer a diverse range of curated content including commercial-free documentaries, arts and culture, drama and children's programs. Our passion for sharing stories that inform and inspire supports B.C.'s independent production community through the commissioning of documentary programs.

We are also a member of the Independent Broadcast Group (IBG)/Le groupe de diffuseurs indépendants (GDI). The IBG is an association of independent broadcasters serving Canadian audiences in English, French, Indigenous and a multitude of third languages, reflecting the rich tapestry of Canada's population. In the winter of 2024, a number of IBG members created an Accessibility Working Group with a view to preparing our respective Accessibility Plans for 2024-2027. We worked in collaboration with other IBG members to prepare and conduct our consultations with persons with disabilities and experts that were both internal and external to our respective organizations.

The feedback we have received from persons with disabilities, our employees, engaged partners, and experts was instrumental in completing our Accessibility Plan 2024-2027. We are excited about the journey ahead and committed to ensuring that our organization and services are welcoming, inclusive, and accessible.

ii)   <u>Contact Information, Feedback Process and Alternative Format Requests</u>

If you would like to provide Knowledge Network with feedback relating to accessibility and our organization, our Feedback Process, or our Accessibility Plan 2024-2027, please contact our accessibility lead who will be pleased to assist:

Knowledge Network Contact Information:

Glenna Pollon, Director of Government Relations and Communications, is our accessibility lead responsible for receiving all accessibility-related feedback, questions and comments. You can reach Glenna through the following methods:

Mailing address: 4355 Mathissi Place, Burnaby B.C. V5G 4S8
Toll-free: 1-877-456-6988
Email: info@knowledge.ca
Online Form: Accessibility Feedback | Knowledge.ca

Requesting Alternate Formats: Accessibility Plan and Accessibility Feedback Process

Our Accessibility Plan and Accessibility Feedback Process are available in alternative formats. To request an alternate format, please contact Glenna Pollon using the contact details above.

Anonymous Feedback

If you prefer to remain anonymous, please do not include personal details like your name or contact information in your communications with our organization.

Any personal information you provide will remain confidential unless you explicitly consent to share it with others.

2. <u>Accessibility Summary</u>

Knowledge Network's Accessibility Plan represents an important step towards creating a more accessible and inclusive environment within Canada's media sector. We are dedicated to ongoing engagement as well as to meeting the objectives of the Accessible Canada Act and the Accessible B.C. Act in the years ahead. As we prepared our Accessibility Plan, we conducted a number of initiatives to gain invaluable input and to work collaboratively with persons with disabilities, our colleagues and engaged partners.

These initiatives include the following:

Establishment of Accessibility Working Group with Certain IBG Members: In the winter of 2024, we formed an Accessibility Working Group comprised of accessibility champions from five Canadian independent broadcaster organizations, as well as legal counsel with expertise in regulatory compliance and accessibility. This Working Group met weekly to discuss action items, best practices and the requirements of the Accessible Canada Act. This collaborative approach was highly effective for small Canadian broadcasters seeking to create a more accessible environment for Canadians.

Establishment of Accessibility Committee Within our Organization: In the winter of 2024, we formed an interim Accessibility Committee with members including Glenna Pollon, Director of Government Relations and Communications, Pamela Pedersen, Manager, Human Resources and Ana Fleming, Executive Assistant to the President and CEO. We will expand this Committee in the coming year with members from across our organization. Our interim Accessibility Committee meets regularly to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers within our environment. We also met to provide important input and insights into the preparation of our Accessibility Plan.

Conducting an Internal Assessment of our Organization: In spring 2024, we started an assessment of our organization regarding accessibility. This assessment is ongoing and will include a review of our work environment, communications, and our broadcasting service.

Internal Employee Consultation: In the spring of 2024, Knowledge Network conducted an online survey regarding accessibility in our workplace to gather critical information in view of preparing our Accessibility Plan. This optional survey was distributed to all employees, and each was given a week to respond to the questionnaire. 32 employees, or 63% of all staff, participated in the survey and 4 respondents identified as a person living with a disability. We believe that their firsthand experiences are invaluable in identifying any barriers that might exist, as well as providing insightful suggestions on how to address potential barriers.

External Consultations: In 2024, Knowledge Network engaged in a consultation with disability advocacy groups, experts on accessibility, and persons with disabilities. In British Columbia, we engaged with the **Richmond Centre for Disability**. Nationally, our IBG Accessibility Working Group engaged with **SignAble Vi5ion**, **the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)**, and **DeafBlind Ontario Services**. Our engagement with these organizations allowed us to consult with persons living with disabilities and to learn more about barriers they may face in the workplace with hiring practices, communications technologies, and in relation to accessibility and broadcasting services.

Knowledge Network Accessibility Pilot Project: To learn more about digital accessibility for video content platforms, we introduced an Accessibility Pilot Program in 2023 to encourage feedback from viewers living with a disability. This is one of many steps we are taking on our path to become a more inclusive and accessible organization.

Guiding Principles for Accessibility at Knowledge Network: At Knowledge Network, we appreciate the principle of "Nothing Without Us." We are also mindful of the important principles set out in section 6 of the Accessible Canada Act, which form the basis of our Accessibility Plan and our accessibility decision-making work for the future.

These principles are:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.

2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.

3. All persons must have barrier free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.

4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.

5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations – Module 1: Accessibility Plans 3 environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.

6. Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.

7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.[1]

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[1] Employment and Social Development Canada - Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations - Module 1: Accessibility Plans PDF.

3. <u>Consultations for Knowledge Network's Accessibility Plan</u>

At Knowledge Network, engaging with our employees, independent filmmakers, engaged partners, and audiences is a vital part of our daily activities. While preparing our Accessibility Plan, we also conducted several consultation initiatives to obtain invaluable input from our community and persons living with disabilities.

i) <u>Accessibility Feedback Page</u>

In our efforts to ensure accessibility within our organization, we published an Accessibility Feedback Page in June 2023 as required by the Accessible Canada Act and the related Regulations. Our Accessibility Feedback Page can be found here [Accessibility Feedback | Knowledge.ca](https://Knowledge.ca).

We have also included at **Appendix 1** the language of our Accessibility Feedback Page.

Our Accessibility Feedback Page was designed to collect information from persons with disabilities, our employees and engaged partners in a range of areas, such as:

- Content accessibility (ie. closed captions, described video)
- Digital accessibility (ie. assistive technology use on the website or app)
- Facilities (ie. facilities access, events accessibility)

We have received one comment regarding our Accessibility Pilot Project. We will continue to work to ensure awareness about our Accessibility Feedback Page over the course of the next three years.

ii) <u>Accessibility Committee</u>

In our ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive workplace, we also established an interim Accessibility Committee in the spring of 2024 with members including Glenna Pollon, Director of Government Relations and Communications, Pamela Pedersen, Manager, Human Resources and Ana Fleming, Executive Assistant to the President and CEO. We will expand this Committee in the coming year with members from across our organization. Our primary role is to facilitate discussions, identify potential accessibility barriers, reflect on input from persons with disabilities, assist with the preparation of our Accessibility Plan, and spearhead initiatives to enhance accessibility across our organization.

iii) Internal Employee Consultation

Alongside the creation of our interim Accessibility Committee, we conducted an internal online employee accessibility survey over the course of one week in April 2024. We asked all employees a series of 10 questions designed to uncover any barriers they may have encountered concerning accessibility within our organization. Our survey also sought input on how to prevent and remove accessibility barriers in the future. 32 employees, or 63% of all staff, responded to the survey.

The survey provided us with valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of our employees. Specifically, barriers during the recruitment and onboarding process were noted and have informed priority actions in our Accessibility Plan moving forward. The findings from the survey will be instrumental in informing possible changes and improvements within our organization.

We will continue to encourage open dialogue about accessibility and invite all employees to contribute their experiences and suggestions. Our goal is to maintain a proactive approach to identifying and addressing accessibility issues within our organization.

iv) External Consultations

To enhance accessibility and inclusivity at Knowledge Network, members of our Accessibility Committee actively participated in sessions with notable disability advocacy groups throughout April/May 2024. Our engagements involved thoughtful interactions and discussions with representatives from the **Richmond Centre for Disability**, **SignAble Vi5ion**, **Access Labs through the CNIB**, and **DeafBlind Ontario Services**. It was important for us to meet with a B.C. based organization, so the engagement with the Richmond Centre for Disability was held independently of the IBG consultations. As a broadcaster, we primarily engage with physical mediums consumed through sight and sound. Therefore, while these consultations included discussions on general accessibility awareness, there was a focus on organizations which represent the needs of individuals with physical disabilities, to better address the specific accessibility challenges presented by our broadcasting service.

Richmond Centre for Disability, based in Richmond B.C., is a consumer centered organization committed to enabling all people with disabilities to make informed choices, creating opportunities, meeting their goals and reaching their full potential. They offer an empowering, friendly environment where they work to provide quality services that lead to inclusion for people with disabilities and greater public awareness. The Richmond Centre for Disability responds to the needs of members and communities, thus designs and provides services and activities involving skills development, literacy, health,

recreation, technology, peer support and disabilities support services. They take a cross and multi-disability, self-directed and inclusive approach. We held three sessions with the Richmond Centre for Disability focusing on ways to engage with our staff on accessibility and ensure employees living with a disability and job applicants are supported to be successful. Also discussed were approaches to empowering our employees and our leaders so they feel confident in supporting and serving persons with disabilities. Through these sessions, we gathered valuable insights and feedback on our proposed plan and actions. This engagement provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of people living with a disability and offered essential guidance on how we might enhance our organization to better serve their needs.

SignAble Vi5ion is an organization run by founder Leah Riddell who is a consultant, ASL instructor, and deaf woman. Leah is a champion for creating a more equitable world, and champions ASL as a means to not only create inclusion for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind, but also for many other communities, such as new Canadians, autistic people, neurodivergent communities, and seniors.[2] Leah communicated to the IBG participants using ASL interpreters. Her presentation focused on cultural etiquette on how to interact with deaf, hearing impaired, and deafblind individuals, including learning essential strategies for effective communication and respectful engagement. Leah also discussed accessibility barriers to employment, workplace accommodations, communications technologies, and broadcasting services. Additionally, Leah discussed strategies and best practices for preventing accessibility barriers. She also made a number of important recommendations such as best practices for conducting job interviews with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, optimal online platforms to use for accessible virtual meetings and the appropriate inclusive language to use when referring to persons living with disabilities. A Question and Answer period was also held to allow a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of persons living with disabilities.

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[2] SignAble Vi5ion Website - About Page.

The **CNIB** is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. The CNIB delivers innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empowers people impacted by blindness.[3] CNIB's Access Labs is a social enterprise supporting businesses, organizations, and government institutions to ensure all Canadians with disabilities can benefit from barrier-free communities and workplaces.[4] The CNIB's presentation and engagement with the IBG focused on general accessibility awareness, highlighting how to remove everyday barriers and obstacles in the workplace that help make an environment more inclusive and safe for everyone. There was a focus on how to approach individuals who are blind and low vision, including steps that organizations can take to ensure the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of all employees, particularly those living with disabilities. The CNIB's presentation also focused on the duty to accommodate, the importance of accessible web and media platforms as well as approaches for ensuring inclusivity at a range of work-related functions.

One of the presenters, David Greenidge, Director of Operations for Access Labs at the CNIB, is partially sighted and shared examples of his lived experience throughout the presentation. Additionally, there was a member of the community with vision loss present to discuss best practices for digital communications services and television programming, such as the importance of clear and professional audio description.

DeafBlind Ontario Services supports people who are deafblind, as well as people who are deaf, hard of hearing and non-verbal with a developmental disability. This organization offers specialized services for persons living with a disability, customized to each person's unique needs, method of communication, and goals to live their best life.[5] Their presentation to the IBG was given by an individual who is deafblind as well as an individual who is deaf. The presenters were accompanied by an ASL interpreter as well as another staff person expert in the area. Their presentation focused particularly on technologies for optimal workplace performance and communications with persons with disabilities, how to ensure a more accessible work environment, as well as how to ensure broadcasting services are accessible. Both presenters also provided important input on the importance of technology to create a more inclusive workplace, and how best to work with ASL interpreters for workplace meetings and accommodations.

This direct feedback was invaluable, as it gave participants firsthand insights into the daily challenges, and technological needs of individuals with auditory and visual disabilities. A Question and Answer period was also held at the end of the presentation to allow for an exchange on how to create a more accessible work environment.

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[3] CNIB Website - About Us Page.
[4] CNIB Website - Access Labs Page.
[5] DeafBlind Ontario Services Website - About Page.

In addition to what is outlined above, the sessions conducted with these organizations and persons living with disabilities focused on several key areas:

1. Workplace Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities: We explored strategies to optimize our built environment to better support the needs of employees with disabilities.
2. Hiring, Retaining, and Promoting Persons with Disabilities: Our discussions centered on enhancing human resources policies to ensure equitable opportunities for all staff members.
3. Technologies for Optimal Workplace Performance and Communications: We examined current and emerging technologies that can facilitate more effective workplace performance and smoother communication for persons with disabilities.
4. Best approaches for communicating with potential future employees and colleagues living with disabilities.
5. Broadcasting Services and Accessibility. We addressed how our broadcasting services can be improved to ensure they are fully accessible to all audience members.

The discussions we had with the expert representatives from these communities on the above topics allowed participants to delve deeply into critical areas impacting accessibility, both within the workplace and the broadcasting services provided to the public. They were highly insightful, informative, and inspiring.

4. <u>Accessibility Priorities – Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act</u>

The purpose of the Accessible Canada Act is to allow all Canadians, especially Canadians with disabilities, live in a country without barriers to accessibility by 1 January 2040.

Section 5 of the Accessible Canada Act identifies the following areas where the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers must be pursued:

- Employment
- The built environment
- Information and communications technologies
- Communications other than information and communications technologies
- The procurement of goods, services, and facilities
- The design and delivery of programs and services
- Transportation
- Other areas designated under regulation, such as conditions of licence for broadcasters

The following portions of our Accessibility Plan address these priority areas of accessibility.

i)   **Employment**

Knowledge Network is dedicated to inclusivity in our hiring, retention, and promotion practices. Currently, we employ 50 employees. Our head office is located in Burnaby, British Columbia and we operate one television station and two streaming services (Knowledge Network and Knowledge Kids) for B.C. audiences to enjoy.

We aim to foster a supportive and equitable workplace that facilitates the recruitment, retention, and career progression of all employees, with attentive consideration to the accessibility needs of those with disabilities.

While we have made great strides over the last few years, we recognize that there is still more work to be done.

Table 1 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Employment Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Further develop the mandate and objectives of Knowledge Network's Accessibility Committee	Year 1
Review and update of Knowledge Network's policies, procedures, guidelines, and practices related to accessibility	Year 1 and Year 2
Review and revise recruitment processes to ensure that job postings are accessible and interview processes are accommodating.	Year 2
Tap into networks to share employment opportunities that reach people with disabilities.	Year 1
Provide training and resources for senior managers to be leaders for accessibility and support a workplace culture of access & inclusion.	Year 2
Build on accessibility training and development for employees.	Year 3
Create a place for accessibility & inclusion resources on employee intranet site.	Year 3

ii) Built Environment

As a tenant in a building owned and operated by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Knowledge Network does not control the building and built facilities for our employees and visitors. Through ongoing dialogue and engagement with BCIT and the other tenants in our building, we will continue to champion environments that are accessible and that promote safety, comfort, and independence for individuals with varying needs.

Table 2 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Built Environment Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Establish a communications plan to inform employees, clients and visitors of any physical limitations that may exist and any accommodations that can be provided.	Year 1
Work with venue partners to maximize accessibility for events.	Year 2

iii)   Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

As a Canadian broadcaster that works within the digital landscape, we recognize that accessible Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is important. This commitment is reflected in our proactive measures as well as our commitment to our employees and organization.

Table 3 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Conduct an audit of communications technologies and options available for persons with disabilities.	Year 3
Review and assess accessible technology and resources, including assistive devices and software that enhance digital accessibility (i.e. screen readers, text-to-speech software, adaptive keyboards, and touchscreen assistive technologies).	Year 3
Update corporate website to ensure it is accessible and comply with WCAG Guidelines.	Year 2

iv)   Communications, Other Than ICT

Clear and effective communication is crucial to our operations. We are committed to adapting traditional communication methods to better serve all employees and viewers, with special attention to the needs of those with disabilities. Our efforts include improving the accessibility of communication materials and ensuring that our in-person interactions and other non-digital forms of communication are designed to promote an inclusive environment.

Table 4 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Communications, Other than ICT Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Develop guidelines for creating accessible documents.	Year 2
Train staff in creating accessible documents and presentations to ensure internal and external materials are inclusive.	Year 3

v)   Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities

Procurements are conducted mainly by our organization's Finance and Administration Department. Through our procurement practices, we strive to reflect our commitment to accessibility.

Table 5 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Conduct an audit of current procurement policies, processes and procedures and consider options to improve accessibility within our organization	Year 3

vi)   Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

As an independent, public educational broadcaster, providing quality, freely available and commercial-free television and streaming services to British Columbians is the primary mandate of our organization.

We recognize the importance of designing and delivering programs and services that are accessible to our audiences, including those with disabilities. The Knowledge Network Accessibility Pilot Project was developed in 2023 to learn more about digital accessibility for video content platforms, encouraging feedback from viewers living with a disability. This is one of many steps we are taking on our path to become a more inclusive and accessible organization.

Our commitment is reflected in our continuous efforts to evaluate, adapt, and enhance the accessibility of our programs and services to ensure they are comprehensible, reachable, and usable for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

Table 6 - Accessible Canada Act Priority Design and Delivery of Programs and Services Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Conduct a review and assessment of accessibility features that can be adopted (broadcast and streaming) to make content licensed for our service more accessible for audiences.	Year 2
Conduct outreach with the Disability Screen Office (DSO) to determine how to enhance the accessibility of our commissioning practices for independent producers who are living with a disability.	Year 3
Conduct a review of the content available on our streaming services and determine how accessibility may be enhanced.	Year 1

vii)   Transportation

This area of accommodation and accessibility is not relevant to Knowledge Network. We therefore have no comments for this section.

viii)   Licence Conditions and Requirements Under the Broadcasting Act

The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regulates and supervises broadcasting in Canada. As such, the CRTC requires broadcasters to comply with certain accessibility requirements, such as closed captioning, described video and audio description of audiovisual content (these obligations can vary depending on a broadcaster's licensing requirements).

As required by section 42(1) of the Accessible Canada Act, we have set out a list of applicable conditions and requirements that Knowledge Network adheres to pursuant to our broadcasting licence that ensure accessibility of our broadcasting services.

Knowledge Network's conditions of licence related to accessibility include:

- Closed-captioning - caption 100% of programs and promos broadcast over the broadcast day,
- Described video - provide, in the first year of the new licence term (2023/24), a minimum of four hours of described video per broadcast week for programming that is drawn from existing program categories identified for described video and broadcast during prime time, and to increase incrementally the amount of described video for such programming by three additional hours per broadcast week for each subsequent broadcast year of that licence term.

We strive to meet these requirements during each broadcast year.

Table 7 - Licence Conditions and Requirements Under the Broadcasting Act Detailed Plan

Action	Planned Completion
Operate in compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements relating to closed captioning and described video.	Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3
Explore best practices within the broadcasting sector to serve persons with disabilities.	Year 2 and Year 3

5. <u>Conclusion</u>

Knowledge Network's Three-Year Accessibility Plan outlines our path toward becoming a more accessible and inclusive organization. We are committed to monitoring our progress and reviewing actions annually to ensure continuous learning and improvement.

We are inspired by a vision of an inclusive community for all British Columbians. We look forward to continuing to work with persons with disabilities, our engaged partners, and the broadcast community to contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of the Accessible Canada Act and the Accessible B.C. Act.

Appendix 1

Knowledge Network Feedback Process

The purpose of the accessibility feedback form is to collect information from persons with disabilities to improve our accessibility services related to one of the following areas:

- Content accessibility (e.g. closed captions or described video)
- Digital accessibility (e.g. assistive technology use on our websites or apps)
- Facilities (e.g. Knowledge Network facility, events accessibility)

Please fill out the form below to provide feedback or receive accessibility support. Glenna Pollon, Director of Government Relations and Communications is leading our Accessibility efforts. We will acknowledge receipt of your feedback (unless anonymous) within 2 business days.

- **Email Input (Optional).** To keep your feedback anonymous, leave the email field blank.
- **Telephone Number Input (Optional).** To keep your feedback anonymous, leave the telephone number field blank.
- **Issue Type Input (Required)**. Please choose the option that best relates to your feedback. Options: Content accessibility, Digital accessibility, or Facilities.
- **Subject Input.** Please summarize your concern in less than 60 characters
- **Feedback Input (Required).** Please describe your concern, including any relevant details such as the webpage or program involved.
- **Attachment File Upload (Optional).** Files must be less than 64 MB. Allowed file types: gif jpg jpeg png bmp eps tif pict psd txt rtf html odf pdf doc docx ppt pptx xls xlsx xml avi mov mp3 mp4 ogg wav bz2 dmg gz jar rar sit svg tar zip.
- **Consent to be contacted Checkbox.** "I would like to be contacted by Knowledge Network for future consultation on improving Accessibility."

You can also contact us:
Glenna Pollon, Director of Government Relations and Communications
Knowledge Network
4355 Mathissi Place
Burnaby, B.C., V5G 4S8
Toll-Free: 1-877-456-6988
Email: info@knowledge.ca

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