



ACCESSIBILITY CERTIFICATION CONSULTATION

Phase 1 Report: Identifying the Issues

FOR YOUR REVIEW

We have provided space for your input in the body of the report. We will incorporate this feedback into the final version of the report.

January 2016

Table of Contents

The Accessibility Certification Project	3
The Certification Spectrum	4
A Certification Model for Business	4
Strengths and Challenges to a Successful Certification Model.....	5
Public Consultation and Engagement	7
Certifiedforaccess.ca	8
The Consultation and Reporting Process	9
Key Themes and Considerations	11
Governance and Leadership	11
Key Discussion Points	11
Points for Further Dialogue	13
Key Takeaways for Designing the Model	13
Model Design.....	13
Key Discussion Points	14
Points for Further Dialogue	16
Key Takeaways for Designing the Model	17
The Economic Argument and Other Incentives for Business.....	17
Key Discussion Points	17
Points for Further Dialogue	19
Key Takeaways for Designing the Model	20
Revenue Model	20
Key Discussion Points	21
Points for Further Dialogue	21
Key Takeaways for Designing the Model	22
Implementation and Scope.....	22
Key Discussion Points	22
Points for Further Dialogue	23
Key Takeaways for Designing the Model	24
Next Steps.....	24
Phase 2 (February – March, 2016)	24
The Challenge (February – April, 2016)	24
Phase 3 (April – May, 2016).....	25
Note to the Reader	25

The Accessibility Certification Project

The principles of universal design dictate that by designing for the wide spectrum of human abilities, we can create things that are easier for all people to use. In public life, this universal access benefits everyone who plans, provides, or uses products and services. Similarly, the steps to engage businesses, strengthen foundations, and promote a broader culture shift that are mapped out in Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan will not only benefit the one in seven Ontarians who have a disability, but all Ontarians and visitors to Ontario.

In committing to this plan, the Government of Ontario recognizes that a multi-pronged strategy will be most effective in addressing the barriers Ontarians with disabilities continue to face as citizens, consumers and employees. An independent, voluntary accessibility certification-type model could be an important part of this strategy, promoting the value of accessibility beyond the current framework prescribed by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The certification model will be designed and delivered by the people it will most impact – Ontarians with lived experience of barriers to accessibility, whether as consumers or businesses. This will take place through a public consultation and co-design process that will enable end users to develop a model that will best serve their needs.

While accessibility can mean something different to each individual, accessibility at a broad level means being respectful, inclusive, and providing universal access, regardless of a person's ability. For persons with disabilities, accessibility enables inclusion in the workforce and economy. For businesses, it provides an opportunity to access a larger customer base and to increase productivity by welcoming a wide range of talent to their workforce. Estimates from the Martin Prosperity Institute suggest that increased accessibility could increase GDP per capita in Ontario by up to \$600 per annum.¹ An accessibility certification program would serve to:

- Reduce attitudinal barriers and promote the value of accessibility
- Lead organizations to a better understanding of what they can do to increase their accessibility and how accessibility can benefit their organization
- Give a wider range of people improved access to goods and services
- Support a gradual cultural shift toward embracing the business case for accessibility, making accessibility part of daily life

Accessibility certification will not replace, change or overlap with the existing framework under the AODA. It is not intended to be an audit of AODA compliance, but rather a voluntary opportunity for organizations to highlight themselves as leaders in accessibility and to demonstrate the level of accessibility that organizations are able to achieve. Perhaps more critical than enhanced visibility is the opportunity to drive the bar higher

¹ Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario. Rep. Martin Prosperity Institute, n.d. Web. June 2015.

and to encourage even greater levels of accessibility throughout society. The certification model would not aid or verify compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Rather, it is intended to recognize accessibility champions and to incentivize others to move above and beyond compliance.

The Certification Spectrum

Certification refers to a “process, often performed by a third party, of verifying that a product, process or service adheres to a given set of standards and/or criteria.”² As such, the term encompasses a broad range of models, differing in their scope, design, incentive structure, and leadership. Certification might be:

- Non-institutional (i.e., reliant on crowd-sourcing) or institutional (i.e., run by a central organization)
- Tiered or single-level; ratings-based or pass/fail
- Sector-specific or network-wide; geographically contained or portable to other jurisdictions
- Demographic-specific (i.e., a certain functional or interest area) or inclusive of a range

The reader should consider the findings contained in this report as a first step to determining where an accessibility model could best fit on the certification spectrum.

A Certification Model for Business

While this process is open-ended as to what an accessibility certification could look like, the choice of model should motivate businesses to incorporate accessibility into their operations and service delivery. Each business, regardless of sector or size, should see accessibility as a value and certification as viable in their context.

Through our discussions, business owners have identified improving customer service, increasing revenue, and improving branding and marketing opportunities as key motivators for change to their business model. Particularly business owners with a high degree of awareness and experience with accessibility saw a link between these key motivators and certification. Certification could help to expand their client base, diversify services, and welcome new, talented employees, in turn increasing revenue. Recognition and visibility for businesses that show excellence in accessibility is a further driver for change.

² Matus, Kira. “Standardization, Certification, and Labeling: A Background Paper for the Roundtable on Sustainability Workshop January 19-21, 2009.” *Certifying Sustainable? The Role of Third-Party Certification Systems: Report of a Workshop* (2009): 79-104.

As a business:

- 1) **What motivates you to make changes to your business?**
- 2) **What could certification do for you?**
- 3) **How would you describe your level of awareness and/or comfort with accessibility?**

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

Strengths and Challenges to a Successful Certification Model

Research conducted by Deloitte over summer 2015 identified certain strengths and challenges that apply across the range of potential certification models, based on a jurisdictional scan of 17 global comparator programs and a review of the literature on certification. The following list is not exhaustive, but is rather intended as a starting point to prompt further discussion:

Table 1: Strengths and Potential Challenges in Certification³

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Credibility: in particular, the independence and objectivity offered by independent certifiers is viewed as a core strength.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undermining Existing Efforts: certification programs must be carefully designed and positioned to complement existing standards and efforts on the ground. Failure to do so will result in contradictions and confusion in the marketplace.

³ "Certifiably Sustainable? The Role of Third-Party Certification Systems." National Research Council, 2010. July 2015.
<http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12805>.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning Incentives through Multi- Stakeholder Engagement: certification programs offer the opportunity for more inclusive and sustained participation from multiple stakeholders, helping to better align incentives towards improved outcomes. • Increasing Awareness & Influencing Market Behaviour: certification programs can help incentivize organizations to further advance intended social and environmental goals beyond existing norms / practices. • Complementing and Influencing Existing & Future Standards / Regulations: certification can be used as a tool to complement existing government standards and regulation (for instance, LEED and B Corp). • Formalizing & Harmonizing Standards & Best Practices: certification can help to reduce confusion in the marketplace by helping to formalize and harmonize best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Bias towards Top Performers & Limited SME Adoption: small and medium-sized businesses “may lack the financial and human resources necessary...and may not see the financial benefit of being certified.”⁴ Engaging multiple large and small stakeholders can help to address these challenges. • Eliminating Weak Performers: certification can lack consequences for weak performers. As such, it may not always be the most effective means to “raise performance at the bottom of a sector.”⁵ • Free Riders: those not participating in certification may still benefit if accessibility is not clearly defined, monitored, and evaluated. • Sustainability: for programs to remain sustainable, they require continuous attention and flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Inability to do so can reduce program relevance, legitimacy and credibility.

A program’s balance of any of these strengths and challenges will differ based on the design and approach of the model. A non-institutional or crowd-sourced approach can easily adapt to changing technology and regulations, but may showcase rather than actively harmonize best practices. On the other end of the spectrum, a purely institutional approach can help to formalize and align standards to a high degree of

⁴ Mining Certification Evaluation Project. Rep. Jan. 2006.

<http://commdev.org/files/683_file_MCEP_Final_Report_Jan2006.pdf>.

⁵ Certifiably Sustainable? The Role of Third-Party Certification Systems." National Research Council, 2010.

credibility. The more rigid structure, however, may contradict or distract from existing efforts and may lack the flexibility to adapt to different business types and capacity.

Based on the same jurisdictional scan of existing programs, Deloitte identified six key design considerations for a successful certification model. While each factor was given more or less weight based on the program context, successful programs (in terms of visibility, uptake, reach, user endorsement, etc.) incorporated most or all criteria in some capacity. Participants in the accessibility certification consultation process may consider how these apply to the Ontario business context:

1. The need to engage multiple stakeholders throughout the certification development process.
2. The need to develop a clear understanding of the underlying issue(s) and objective(s) of the certification program.
3. The need to develop standards that are balanced, flexible and directly aligned with the underlying goals of the program.
4. The use of a trusted, third-party certifier to provide credible, independent and objective assurances that program objectives are being achieved.
5. The use of logos and other incentives to promote interest and uptake in a certification program.
6. The use of a pilot program and well-defined monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure long-term relevance and success

Public Consultation and Engagement

The people impacted by an accessibility certification model, including those with first-hand knowledge and expertise, will own its design and development. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (the Directorate) has engaged Deloitte to facilitate an open, multi-stakeholder public consultation to catalyze this process. Accessibility advocates, persons with disabilities, businesses, certification experts, non-profit organizations, and the broader public sector will come together through a variety of channels to provide recommendations to the eventual third party certifier (see below) on the objectives, design, feasibility, and implementation of an accessibility certification model.

This process differs from traditional government consultations, which tend to be private, controlled, and shaped by government. This project relies on constant engagement with the public, leveraging social media and an online platform, certifiedforaccess.ca, to maintain a transparent and open-ended process. Whatever model emerges from this process will be driven and built by stakeholders and will base its credibility on public approval.

Ultimately, public consultation and engagement is about trust and openness. As parties explore what kind of accessibility certification model they want, the hope is that they will deepen their understanding of common interests, expand their use of shared language, clarify issues and opportunities, and build new tools, systems, and practices to support collaborative action. This could help foster a culture of collaboration, continuous learning and effective change management. This form of community building manages the communities' collective interests and highlights opportunities for the community to work together to solve problems going forward.

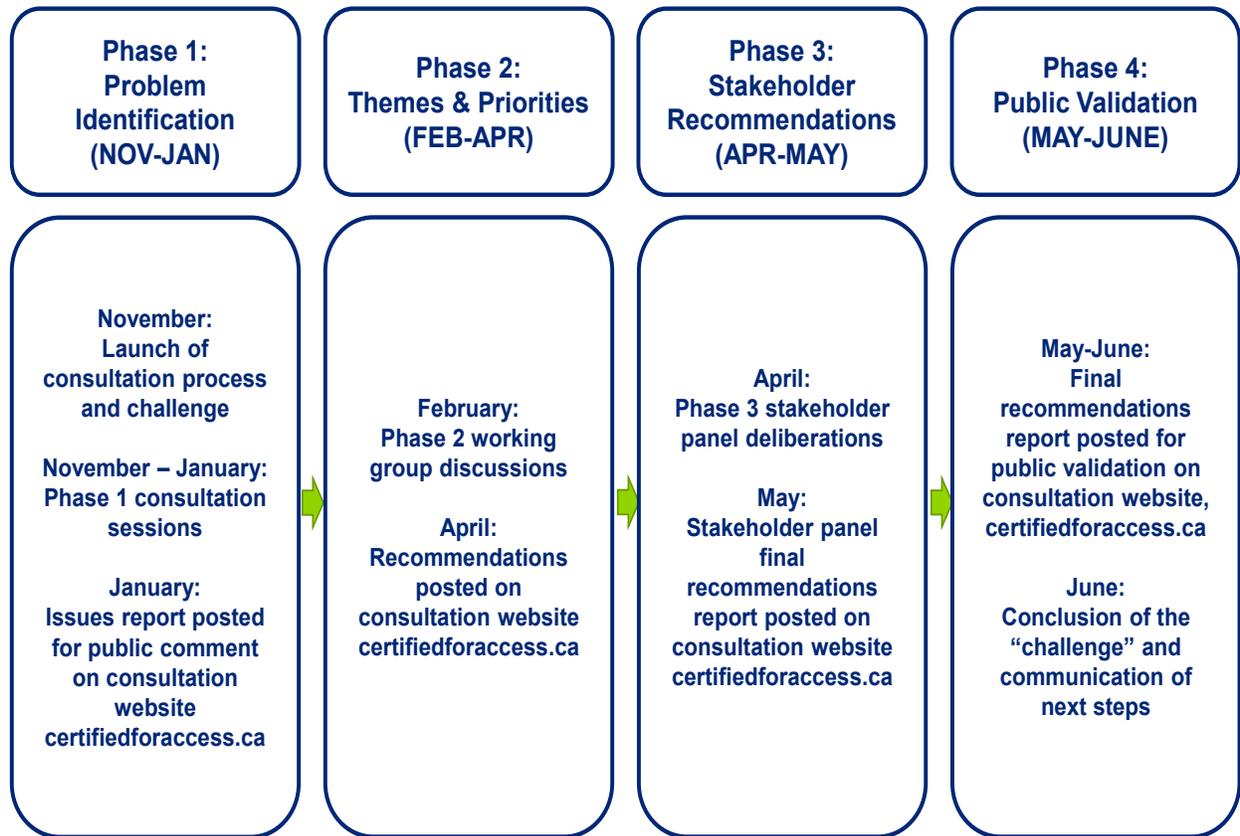
Certifiedforaccess.ca

The online opportunities for engagement, including discussion questions, private feedback, and targeted surveys, have showcased a number of existing best practices and practical suggestions on how to make Ontario more accessible. While the discussion continues online, we have included some excerpts here:

- “DeafBlind Ontario Services’ Accessibility Guidelines...emphasize the inclusion of efficient design, space maneuverability, the importance of illumination, and the use of colour, texture and specialized products. Contrary to popular belief, accessible design does not need to be expensive and may esthetically enhance a space.”
- “Certification credibility is subjective from any organization, and can only be valued according to the procurement requirements and perceptions of prospective consumers...the quality of certification has two aspects for consideration; first, the organization that delivers the skill training, and second the ability of the certificate holder to demonstrate level of experience and knowledge skills.”
- “People who are disabled are individuals. As such, we all have varying levels of ability. We also have varying levels of support to help us to live independently in the community. So, when we say a business is accessible, I want to know, in whose eyes?”
- “Accessibility is still a big word with a variety of areas that need to be identified by businesses, communities and individuals. If we have an accessibility certification program...these individuals could go out to communities or...businesses to assist them with a work plan to achieve the best level of accessibility. That different areas would be covered, or be specialized.”

The Consultation and Reporting Process

The public consultation process will occur in four phases, as illustrated below:



Deloitte will publish reports at each phase for public review and validation on certifiedforaccess.ca. This report summarizes the findings from Phase 1 and will serve as the main tool for this stage of comment and confirmation. The document mirrors the three central objectives from this phase:

- 1) To capture key themes and discussion points from Phase 1 through in person sessions, online submissions, and teleconferences.
- 2) To encourage comment and input from participants and the public and validate findings.
- 3) To set the context and foundations for Phase 2 and Phase 3 discussions.

The findings for the final Phase 1 report have come from three contributing streams:

- 1) Three in person roundtable discussions, bringing together over 100 participants from the accessibility, business, and broader public sector communities to discuss the barriers, opportunities, and risks in developing a certification model
- 2) Engagement and feedback online via certifiedforaccess.ca, Facebook, and Twitter

- 3) Teleconferences with over 30 individuals unable to attend in person sessions, including:
 - a. A teleconference with representatives of the Franco-Ontarian business and accessibility communities
 - b. A teleconference with the Self-Advocates Council of people with intellectual disabilities

For more information on the process and engagement opportunities or in order to access the discussion guides, background materials, and detailed discussion summaries from Phase 1, please visit our website and online engagement tool, certifiedforaccess.ca.

Key Themes and Considerations

Five key themes emerged through Phase 1 discussions, held in person, online, over the phone, and one-on-one. Phase 2 working groups will use these five themes as the foundation for a more detailed discussion of the design, development, and delivery of a certification model.

Governance and Leadership

Participants discussed who could lead, champion, and implement an accessibility certification model. Phase 2 working groups might consider how to ensure the lead represents a diversity of perspectives and leverages existing networks.

Key Discussion Points

Ensuring diverse representation at every stage

- Collaboration and partnership should underpin the design, development, and implementation of a certification model, balancing representation of lived experiences and technical expertise
 - Persons with disabilities should be present at every step of the process, representing a range of perspectives and lived experience; accessibility is different for everyone and needs to be defined so that no voice is left out
- Participants were concerned that one organization might have undue influence over the design and implementation of the model
 - Representatives from a broad range of communities and interests should be included in every stage of development and delivery; a network of supports may more effectively encourage uptake than a centralized delivery body
 - The certifying body or bodies and its/their partners would have to have credibility across communities (e.g., French and English, business and advocacy)
- Businesses should be evaluated based on the experience of accessibility rather than the claims of the organization
 - A certification model could draw on the perspective of individuals with barriers to accessibility, whether by certifying individuals or through advisory committees

Promoting community networks of support and dialogue

- The model could identify excellence champions or leaders that exhibit a superior achievement in accessibility, incenting other businesses to follow suit, promoting best practice examples, and building avenues for collaboration and community

Key Discussion Points

- Established research and advocacy organizations could play a key role in the design and implementation of a certification model, leveraging best practices and expertise in a given field to establish common understanding and to facilitate collaboration
- The accessibility and business communities should communicate and collaborate; businesses would benefit from knowing clearly “what’s in it for them” and how to take the first steps
- A universal set of accessibility standards could be integrated into business, computer science, and other educational curricula, pushing new businesses to create unique and competitive accessibility strategies

Establishing mentorship and partnership relationships

- The model could leverage accessibility champions in various networks, establishing central points of coordination (e.g., Business Improvement Area Associations or Chambers of Commerce) for small and medium enterprises and facilitating mentor and partner relationships
- Collaboration, whether facilitated by the certifying body or through a central point of coordination, might be between businesses or could involve sharing best practices between educational institutions, large for-profit, or non-profit organizations and smaller businesses
 - Partnerships could leverage the skill sets and experiences of different businesses and existing organizations, creating an approach based around the initiatives and specific needs of each community
 - Mentorships may emerge organically, but would be based upon clearly defined criteria set by a recognized, credible, and accountable certifier that can ensure accountability
 - The certifier or a coordinating body could launch a public registry of available mentors and interested mentees

Do you agree? What did we miss?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

While participants broadly agreed on the above points as foundational considerations, Phase 2 working groups could further discuss and find consensus on the following points:

Points for Further Dialogue

- Would accessibility mentors be other businesses (e.g., early adopters), large organizations (e.g., big banks), individuals with disabilities, or organizations in the non-profit or public sphere?
- Would mentorships and partnerships be structured or encouraged to develop organically?
- Would coordination come from the public sector (e.g., Municipal Advisory Boards, the provincial Partnership Council), the private sector (e.g., Business Improvement Area Associations, Chambers of Commerce), educational institutions, or the non-profit sector?
- Would one organization or an association of organizations own and implement the model?
 - How centralized or decentralized would the certification model leadership be?
 - Would centralized leadership give too much power to one group or perspective? Would a decentralized model have enough structure to hold businesses accountable?
 - How would local partners or organizations be involved?

What do you think?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

Key Takeaways for Designing the Model

Participants agreed that a collaborative, community-led program with an inclusive and diverse leadership would be most likely to achieve success. That said, participants differed as to who would deliver the model.

“The subject matter experts are the people with lived experience. They must be the key collaborators in this journey.”

Model Design

Participants discussed both guiding principles and practical design considerations for an accessibility certification model. Participants emphasized that a certification model would have to be simple, fluid and evolving, able to adapt to different accessibility requirements and business types. It would also incorporate elements of both awareness-building and concrete actions.

Key Discussion Points

Distinguishing between certification and compliance

- Certification would recognize effort and commitment in going above and beyond AODA standards, with foundations set beyond compliance
- Certification should ensure that the principles and legislative requirements of equity and human rights are maintained in the design, scope, and implementation of the model
- The distinction between compliance and certification should be reinforced by who leads certification (third party vs. government), the method of enforcing certification (customer endorsement, regulation, etc.), and the language used to describe the process (e.g., accessibility vs. universal access)
- Participants differed on whether certification should be based on self-assessment or external evaluation, though all agreed that the model needed a system to keep the process accountable and ensure that certified businesses are truly accessible

Ensuring clear objectives and adaptability to different contexts

- The certification model would be a living entity that is aspirational, flexible, and evolving
 - Certification would be a model of recognition based on an individual's experience, representing the full diversity of what "accessible" might mean
- The model would have clearly defined objectives, guidelines, or guiding principles with a toolkit of resources to support uptake
 - The model would incorporate elements of awareness-building and education as well as practicable actions
 - A "one-stop shop" for tools and support would help businesses overwhelmed by resources and uncertain where to start
- The model would be simple, identifying accessibility foundations with clear and actionable next steps for businesses (e.g., an accessibility playbook)
 - The model could involve levels of accessibility, with universal access as the end goal
 - Business could be recognized, rewarded, or given publicity as encouragement for gradual improvements
 - Some participants referenced the Business Disability Forum's Accessibility Maturity Model as an example of a matrix that allows businesses to start from a baseline of accessibility (set above compliance) with clear direction on how to evolve
- The model could be adaptable to different business types and sizes and flexible enough to incorporate new technology and innovation
 - Participants were concerned that a one-size-fits-all certification would be ineffective; the model could address specific capacity, skill sets, or levels of experience

Key Discussion Points

- Allowing businesses to start with a baseline and evolve according to their needs, knowledge, and expertise would ensure accessibility and continued competitiveness
- A personality test or customer experience rating would allow businesses to identify which accessibility measures beyond compliance are most relevant to them and their business

Creating an accessibility toolkit

- Businesses could use an accessibility toolkit, a set of simple, low-cost tools packaged collaboratively between individuals with lived experience and a broad range of sectors
- There are a wealth of existing tools and programs that could serve as resources or component parts of a certification model
 - Resources could include a registry of accessibility specialists, a digital library of videos and training support resources, a network of mentors or support groups, or a discussion forum
- Leveraging crowd sourcing and networking technology would empower individuals (e.g., through ratings or endorsements) and build communities around accessibility in the long term
 - Participants noted that a system for customer endorsement would have to be simple and universally understandable (e.g., using pictures instead of words or a voting system rather than a complicated ratings process)
- Built-in mechanisms for feedback from those most impacted by the model could maintain its relevance and uptake

Do you agree? What did we miss?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

“An accessibility certification model should clearly define guidelines to establish expectations [for the procuring client]. The model could include an Advisory Council to monitor and modify the program, a registry of certified individuals or organizations, and a...measurement of maturity from year to year.”

"To address commonly faced attitudinal barriers, we developed a Learning Lab. The learning lab focuses on educating business owners on the various types of disabilities and how they can educate their staff. It also includes information on people-first language.”

While participants broadly agreed on the above points as foundational considerations, Phase 2 working groups could further discuss and find consensus on the below points. The range of models implied by the term “certification” was a particular topic of focus.

Points for Further Dialogue

- What could certification look like? Does the word imply an institutional, standards-based system?
 - Would the model recognize progressive success or evaluate businesses according to instructions or criteria? Would a pass/fail or an incremental system be more appropriate?
 - Would a checklist be useful in highlighting simple tweaks to improve accessibility or would it be too superficial to lead to meaningful change?
- How can the certification model build on existing tools? Is another model superfluous?
- Would progress towards certification be determined by self-assessment or an administered test?
- Would the model prioritize either awareness-building or simple, practical steps? Is certification a more effective tool for one or the other, or both?
- What are the immediate steps that will lead to a sustainable model?

What do you think?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

Key Takeaways for Designing the Model

Participants agreed that a multi-pronged strategy that promotes awareness and offers simple, actionable solutions would be most attractive to businesses in the short term and most sustainable in the long term. Participants discussed whether the model would prioritize one strategy over the other as well as how the model might recognize and encourage excellence beyond compliance.

“Creating a certification program or model or guideline or whatever you want to call it - if it doesn't include the people that these services address at every step of the process...then you are not going to get that trust. It is going to become another governing body that people with disabilities don't get. Having the lived experience needs to be included in every step of this process.”

The Economic Argument and Other Incentives for Business

Participants saw the need for a broad culture change surrounding accessibility and deliberated on what would make a certification model particularly attractive to businesses. Given participants' agreement that there is an economic argument for accessibility, Phase 2 working groups might consider the different challenges facing small businesses and large organizations looking to embed accessibility and how to communicate the value of universal access to each of these groups.

Key Discussion Points

Addressing attitudinal barriers and lack of awareness

- Attitudes and a lack of awareness are the main barriers to accessibility; the main strength of the certification approach is in addressing these barriers and encouraging a cultural shift
- Many businesses want to be accessible but do not know what that means or how to do it
 - The model could provide guidance on how to incorporate accessibility in strategic planning, with recognition for organizations that do it well
- A focus on productivity and enabling technologies could link accessibility to other business challenges related to attitudinal or systemic barriers, such as adapting to a digital economy or more collaborative management structures
- Increasing employee awareness of accessibility and the needs of persons with disabilities in the community can often make as much of an impact as structural accommodations

Key Discussion Points

- People with intellectual disabilities often encounter employees who speak to their support persons rather than directly to the individual
- Employees are often unaware of invisible or undisclosed disabilities
- Participants expressed having had positive experiences in other jurisdictions (e.g., Vancouver, Quebec) where employees were focused on providing a welcoming and inclusive experience for each individual customer

Communicating the business case for accessibility

- Businesses need clear demonstration that they will get a return for their investment in accessibility
 - The messaging surrounding a certification model would address two key questions from business: “Why should I do this?” and “What’s in it for me?”
- There is an economic argument, supported by market research, that accessibility positively impacts a business’s bottom line in the long run
 - Accessibility could be integrated into a company’s growth strategy – from management policies to tools for increased productivity
 - If market competitiveness were based on an organization’s level of accessibility (if society had high expectations), businesses would be more likely to adopt it
- The certification model should account for small businesses’ lack of capacity and large organizations’ conflicting mandates and regulatory fatigue
 - Several participants suggested an approach that starts by asking what each business’s customers need
- Universal design could serve as a foundation for the business case by promoting the idea that accessibility is good for everyone
 - If businesses think of universal access as more than an add-on, but as a benefit to all consumers and employees, it could generate interest beyond compliance

Marketing accessibility

- Messaging could shift the focus from customer service to the customer experience; businesses are more likely to see the value in accessibility if it is tied directly to their customers’ needs
 - Putting a human face to accessibility through stories and vignettes would help businesses make the connection between accessibility and their customer base
- Businesses are likely to be motivated by appealing to the large demographic of aging seniors as an untapped customer base
- Using language and tools familiar to business (e.g., profit, rationale, organizational efficiency; a star or rating system) could promote uptake

Key Discussion Points

- Celebrating accessibility champions and success stories could spur healthy competition and collaboration between businesses

Branding accessibility

- Marketing the accessibility brand could serve two purposes: to position access as a competitive edge and to signal accessibility to customers
 - The pride associated with displaying the accessibility “brand” would give it power
- Branding could raise awareness and bring accessibility into the mainstream through logos, published scoring, advertising, press coverage and social media (as with LEED, Better Business Bureau, and B Corporation)
 - Logos, ratings, and press coverage would be simple and recognizable by people with a wide range of physical and intellectual disabilities

Do you agree? What did we miss?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

“All these different trainings and certification programs and...separate pieces of things...what I would like as someone who has limited resources but is aware of accessibility and wants to do it well is for someone to walk me through the steps to become excellent.”

While participants broadly agreed on the above points as foundational considerations, Phase 2 working groups could further discuss and find consensus on the below points. The key question for participants was: How can we motivate change?

Points for Further Dialogue

- Can a certification model increase profitability for businesses by enhancing accessibility and improving service to individuals with disabilities?
- What is most likely to incentivize business? Subsidies? Regulatory consequences? Recognition and reward? A strong business case? Greater awareness?
- Will an incentive-based system increase accessibility or “preach to the choir”?

Points for Further Dialogue

- While an incremental approach is more likely to be attractive to business, could businesses be aiming for more from the outset? Would more aggressive benchmarks discourage businesses from doing more than the bare minimum?

What do you think?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

Key Takeaways for Designing the Model

Participants agreed that businesses needed clear evidence of the return on their investment in accessibility, but were divided on how best to communicate this evidence and motivate change. A certification model would carefully consider which incentives would be most effective – for instance, awards, recognition, press coverage – as well as which resources and educational support businesses might need.

“Access drives your bottom line. There is an audience out there that wants to consume...your products and your services and allowing them the widest possible access is inevitably going to increase your bottom line.”

“At the end of the day, we can talk about the great opportunity there is to grow our business, but you will not see a specific or a sudden surge because you've done the right thing to do. To me it is about certainty and it is about customer experience.”

Revenue Model

Participants reached consensus on some broad principles of a self-sustaining certification model. Phase 2 working groups might draw on the revenue models of existing certification tools when designing an independent, voluntary, low cost model.

Key Discussion Points

Designing a self-sustaining, low cost model

- The certification model would not rely on government; it would be led independently
- The certification model would need to be self-sustaining, with an established revenue model
 - Securing adequate financial resources will be critical to maintaining an evolving, flexible model
 - Funds should be used for initiatives that benefit the accessibility and business communities, rather than individual organizations or enterprises
- To be attractive to business, the certification model would need to be low cost and easily accessible to small and medium enterprises as well as non-profit sector providers
- The certification model would have the potential to be transportable and scalable in other jurisdictions
- There are many existing programs that could serve as blueprint revenue models
 - The investment required will depend on whether the model is designed to educate or to administer, whether it is owned by a centralized body or crowd-sourced, etc.

Do you agree? What did we miss?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

While participants broadly agreed on the above points as foundational considerations, Phase 2 working groups could further discuss and find consensus on the below points. As the focus of Phase 1 was on broader issue identification and foundational principles, Phase 2 and Phase 3 discussion could more tactically examine how a certification model might be equitable and self-sustaining.

Points for Further Dialogue

- Would the program charge fees for resources, advertising, or services, or would it remain cost-free for businesses?
- How could a certification model be sustainable to operate while staying affordable for small businesses?
- How might the model balance the accommodating regional differences and setting reliable and universal standards?

Points for Further Dialogue

What do you think?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

Key Takeaways for Designing the Model

Participants agreed that there were many existing programs that could serve as funding model templates, though the choice of funding model may largely depend on the governance, leadership, and scope chosen for an accessibility certification model.

Implementation and Scope

Participants agreed that the scope and implementation of an accessibility certification model should be based on principles of inclusion, co-design, shared ownership, and transparency.

Key Discussion Points

Ensuring inclusive and transparent implementation

- The scope of certification would be determined according to principles of inclusion, transparency, and learning
- The model would go through a pilot phase, with a defined procedure for feedback, evaluation, and continuous improvement
- Participants agreed that not all businesses need all accessibility accommodations, and enterprises may approach certification with different levels of competence. Many participants, however, felt that the model should avoid excluding any one functional area, sector, or accessibility challenge
 - One approach suggested by participants would be to start with more coordinated sectors or regions, with a roadmap to expand to other areas
 - Participants noted that certification should take into account the whole supply chain or ecosystem of services, including infrastructure planners and manufacturers

Leveraging existing foundations and evolving the model

- The certification model could start from foundational principles or a belief in the process of achieving accessibility, to be differentiated according to type and size of businesses as the model matures

Key Discussion Points

- The lived experience or of persons with barriers to accessibility could serve as a benchmark for accessibility excellence
 - Just as accessibility means something different to every individual, so the criteria for accessibility could be defined by individual needs
- There are many existing programs that could serve as blueprint operating models
- A key part of implementation would be the clear communication and marketing of the benefits of universal accessibility and the business case for certification

Do you agree? What did we miss?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

While participants broadly agreed on the above points as foundational considerations, Phase 2 working groups could further discuss and find consensus on the below points. Participants put particular importance on implementation: how can we ensure the design process is thoughtful and inclusive and results in a sustainable model.

Points for Further Dialogue

- How can certification complement but remain distinct from compliance with the law?
- Is it feasible to implement a model that encompasses all sectors and challenges?
 - If the model starts with one functional area or one type of disability, how do we choose where to start? How do we account for the areas initially excluded?
- Will education and individual success stories or economic arguments make for more compelling marketing? How best to brand accessibility in order to motivate change?

What do you think?

Please write your feedback on the above questions in this text box.

“Let’s look at a model of abundance where what determines the reward for the business is the customer to business relationship, or that discussion. We have models out there that...will recognize the diversity of needs within the community.”

Key Takeaways for Designing the Model

Participants agreed that the eventual goal of this process would be a voluntary, independent accessibility certification model that applies to different business types and sizes. Further discussion will determine whether this is feasible or whether the model should pilot in one area and grow to others.

Next Steps

This report represents the views expressed over the course of Phase 1: in roundtable sessions (as validated by the roundtable participants), by teleconference, through online feedback, and in one on one discussions. This report will be posted to certifiedforaccess.ca for review and comment until **Friday, February 5, 2016**. We welcome your comments, critiques, and thoughts on where the process could go from here.

Phase 2 (February – March, 2016)

Phase 2 of the certification consultation process will bring together working groups to delve further into the key themes contained in this report. Working group members could be Phase 1 participants, individuals and organizations from their networks, or other accessibility, business, and certification experts that express interest to the Certified For Access team. Members will be chosen and assigned to working groups based on a set of criteria (found on certifiedforaccess.ca). These working groups will meet three to five times and will produce a brief report of their findings, based on the following two objectives:

- 1) To provide recommendations on how the assigned focus area will fit in an accessibility certification model.
- 2) To identify key considerations and risks associated with the assigned focus area.

The Challenge (February – April, 2016)

The certification model is intended to be independent and voluntary, to be delivered by a non-government third party. One intended outcome of this consultation is to encourage the emergence of leadership from an independent organization, a consortium of organizations and/or a joint venture of individuals to implement the third party certification model. In addition to the above objectives, Phase 2 working groups will consider the criteria for a certifying body or bodies, as associated with their

assigned theme. Deloitte, on behalf of the Directorate, will develop a process based on the aggregated criteria to allow interested parties to assess their suitability to lead the certification model.

Deloitte will facilitate an information session for potential certifying bodies near the end of Phase 2, with details to be confirmed over the course of Phase 2.

Phase 3 (April – May, 2016)

Phase 3 will bring together a 12-15 person panel to create a blueprint for the design and implementation of an accessibility certification model, informed by the Phase 2 working group recommendations. The outcome will be a report outlining the key considerations and risks of implementation, as well as recommended criteria for the certifying body or bodies.

Note to the Reader

As mentioned, this process is voluntary, in its design, development, and implementation. By nature, it will rely at all phases on the experience, goodwill, and enthusiasm of a varied group of individuals and organizations. We thank everyone who has contributed so far to Phase 1, whether in person, over the phone, or online. With input from over 120 individuals and organizations from a broad range of communities, we look forward to collaborating over the coming months and beyond in order to raise the bar on accessibility.

“We always have to be aspirational...but we do have baselines we can work from. We have touchstones we can go to, get conversation to a certain level, and then talk about how aspirational we want to be. That doesn't have to be a today conversation, it can be over a longer period of time. We can continue to be aspirational and also find those milestones along the way.”