
Manitoba Government

Accessibility Plan:

2023 and 2024

This document is available in alternate formats on request.

To request alternate formats or provide feedback about this plan, please contact the Public Service Commission by email at accessibility@gov.mb.ca, by phone at 204-945-2332 (in Winnipeg) or toll-free at 1-800-282-8069 ext. 2332.

We acknowledge that Manitoba's Public Service works throughout the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations and the Homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. Additionally, our work extends throughout Treaties 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

Greetings from the Accessibility Champion

The Manitoba government recognizes that accessibility is a human right. In maintaining the dignity and independence of all Manitobans, when seeking programs and services, every Manitoban should have equal opportunity to full participation in our society, and the right to barrier-free and accessible workplaces and communities.



Manitoba's Public Service (MPS) has a responsibility to continue to work together to help remove barriers and enhance accessibility across all facets of its work. As the Acting Public Service Commissioner and Manitoba Government's Accessibility Champion, I am pleased to share the 2023 and 2024 Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan (MGAP) that will serve as a roadmap to advance accessibility over the next two years.

The MGAP reflects our ongoing commitment to Manitobans by making our workplace, products and services more inclusive and accessible for everyone. Our intention is to continue to raise awareness on the government's accessibility agenda. This includes full implementation of regulated accessibility standard requirements across all departments and continued education of our staff to ensure they understand how to address accessibility issues in their work.

In 2023 and 2024, the Manitoba government is also launching the second and third intakes of the \$20 million Manitoba Accessibility Fund (MAF) to provide annual, sustainable grants to assist Manitoba organizations to remove barriers and comply with accessibility standards. In 2022, the Manitoba government awarded MAF grants to 30 organizations totaling \$756,000, which supported initiatives to improve accessibility, thereby enhancing the lives of all Manitobans and allowing everyone to participate more fully in their communities.

I am proud of our achievements to date and our ongoing commitment to show leadership as an accessible and respectful employer and service provider. As the Manitoba Government Accessibility Champion, I will continue to encourage Deputy Ministers of departments to continue to take responsibility for the implementation of this plan. By enhancing accessibility, we are strengthening government performance and service delivery in all areas of our work, for the benefit of every Manitoban.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Baker

Accessibility Champion

Acting Public Service Commissioner

1. Statement of Commitment

Manitoba's Public Service (MPS) appreciates the diversity of backgrounds, abilities, identities and experiences of Manitobans, and is committed to inclusion to ensure that all Manitobans are able to fully and effectively participate in society. This means being a champion of inclusion and accessibility, and meeting the needs of people who face barriers in ways that maintain dignity and independence.

As a public body, the Manitoba government aims to fully implement The [Accessibility for Manitobans Act \(AMA\)](#) requirements, including existing standards supporting accessible customer service, employment, and information and communications.

The Manitoba government also commits to following standardized procedures when developing and enacting new requirements related to accessible transportation and accessible design of public spaces. Accessible mechanisms to solicit and obtain public feedback will continue to be an essential part of the regulatory development process for the new accessibility standards.

The MGAP is grounded in the principles of access, equality, equity, universal design and systemic responsibility. These principles guide the policies, programs, practices, services and actions identified for 2023 and 2024.

2. What is the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan (MGAP)?

The [AMA](#), enacted in 2013, calls upon the Manitoba government and other public sector organizations to create and update an accessibility plan every two years. The plan must describe the measures the organization will take to identify, prevent and remove barriers that exist.

Consultation efforts

Manitoba's Public Service values the engagement and input of Manitobans, including organizations and individuals with expertise in lived experience and accessibility. Internal consultations with public servants who are Department Accessibility Coordinators (DACs) and members of the Civil Servants with Abilities Network (CSWAN) were held to understand the employee perspective.

In addition, several disability-serving organizations that support individuals with vision, hearing, mental health, physical, and intellectual disabilities provided valuable input to inform this plan.

3. How is MGAP Governed?

The Minister of Families is responsible for overseeing the administration of the [AMA](#), which applies to the private, public, and non-profit sectors. This includes developing accessibility standards through regulations, raising awareness about accessibility and promoting and encouraging the prevention and removal of barriers throughout the province.

Jocelyn Baker, the Acting Public Service Commissioner, and the Manitoba government's Accessibility Champion, provides leadership and support to executive and senior managers in understanding and achieving accessibility. This includes increasing awareness to all public servants about providing accessible services.

The Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee provides overall government direction on accessibility for the public service. Members for 2022 and 2023 include:

- Donald Leitch, clerk of the executive council and cabinet secretary, office of the clerk of executive council
- Michelle Dubik, director under the AMA, deputy minister of families
- Jocelyn Baker, accessibility champion, acting public service commissioner of public service commission

Under the [AMA](#), accessibility standards are developed and are building blocks for making real, measurable and effective changes to accessibility. Each standard focuses on a key area of daily living and outlines specific requirements and timelines for eliminating barriers in organizations, including the Manitoba government. Under the [AMA](#), there are five accessibility standards. Three have been enacted to date and two are in progress.

1. [Accessible Customer Service Standard](#) (enacted May 1, 2018)
2. [Accessible Employment Standard](#) (enacted May 1, 2019)
3. [Accessible Information & Communications Standard](#) (enacted May 1, 2022)
4. [Accessible Transportation Standard](#) (to be enacted in 2023)
5. [Accessible Design of Public Spaces Standard](#) (to be enacted in 2023)

4. 2023 and 2024 Commitments

MPS has been working diligently to advance accessibility to meet the needs of all Manitobans. Through the MGAP, MPS will continue to collectively raise awareness and understanding of accessibility standards and the responsibility of departments to implement these standards throughout all public and internal-facing processes, services and environments. The MGAP will build upon and strengthen efforts underway through the following six priority areas.

5.1 Accessible Customer Service

The [Accessible Customer Service Standard](#) addresses organizational practices and training requirements to provide better customer service to persons with disabilities. By introducing policies, measures and practices addressing training, communication, the presence of service animals and the handling of assistive devices, the goal is to achieve respectful, barrier-free customer service in Manitoba organizations with at least one employee.

- a) Implement outstanding recommendations identified in the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Council's Customer Service Standard Review, with regular updates publicly available on AccessibilityMB.ca
- b) Develop a procedure guide related to service animals, accessible to all employees.
- c) Develop policy to ensure all communications meet accessibility requirements, including materials and services from vendors.
- d) Develop policy to inform the use of American Sign Language (ASL) in public communications, with the goal of expanding the use of ASL and real time captioning in public communications, particularly in public service announcements.
- e) Create a user guide for the use of ASL interpreters for use by all employees, and review the option of a centralized booking system to book interpreters.
- f) Highlight the need for departments to consider Manitoba's accessibility standards in their procurement requirements, in Manitoba's procurement manual for administration.

5.2 Accessible Employment

The [Accessible Employment Standard](#) calls on all employers to consider [reasonable accommodation](#) at various stages of employment as it applies to their organization. This includes recruitment, offer of employment, on the job, return to work, and in training.

- a) Enhance efforts to achieve the 9% benchmark of persons with disabilities (PWD) in MPS by:
 - perform outreach and consultation with community stakeholders on ways to attract PWD into MPS
 - increase communication to departments about the opportunities and benefits to employing more PWD in MPS
 - leverage our existing diversity recruitment programs to recruit PWD
- b) Promote the use of the Career Options Program as a means to hire students with disabilities and the Career Gateway Program to hire employees with disabilities.
- c) Continue the partnership with SCE LifeWorks and Project SEARCH program to provide work and life experience to students with cognitive disabilities.

- d) Increase ongoing communication and implementation of the Accessible Employment Standard by:
- finalize the policy and education framework required to ensure all management, supervisors, human resource professionals, those who coordinate employees, those who develop and implement policies, trainers and facilitators complete training on accessible employment and related legislation
 - ensure employees in these roles have a better understanding of how to remove barriers at all stages of the employment process as part of learning outcomes and objectives of the trainings
 - support the onboarding processes and the development of individualized accommodation plans that describe workplace accommodations and ways to keep employees with disabilities safe during emergencies in the workplace, provide educational materials to support accessibility and maintain accessible workplaces

5.3 Accessible Information and Communications

The [Accessible Information and Communications Standard](#) focuses on removing and preventing barriers that exist digitally, in-print or through interaction with technology or people. Organizations need to consider the ways in which Manitobans interact with or access information they provide, including on websites, to develop measures, policies and practices providing barrier-free information and communication.

- a) Develop a communication plan to inform MPS about the government's responsibilities under the Accessible Information and Communications Standard.
- b) Implement a process to receive and respond to feedback about accessible information and communication.
- c) Develop guidelines to support departments to update and develop electronic forms that are fully accessible.
- d) Continue to explore all communication platforms used in MPS with the goal of advancing accessibility and eliminating engagement barriers, including training on the use of the accessibility features.
- e) Promote the development of a Community of Practice to share knowledge and promote accessibility best practices.
- f) Enhance the profile and content of [AccessibilityMB.ca](#) to meet the international standard Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA level, to make it easier to access tools and resources and test regularly with those with lived experience to support further enhancements to the website.
- g) Require trainers and facilitators to have an understanding of accessibility and create training materials and presentations that are inclusive and accessible.
- h) Implement an integrated case management solution within the Department of Justice to provide a public portal to facilitate online services, such as access to court documents.

5.4 Enhanced Training and Education

- a) Continue to update the mandatory AMA course for MPS with information on new standards as they are introduced, and ensure that staff are completing the updated course. This will include continuing to support centralized tracking and reporting of course completion with senior leaders to support follow-up with employees who have not completed the course updates.
- b) Provide training on creating accessible documents.
- c) Collaborate with the Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABC) Office to advance accessibility by making updates to the ABC recruitment process and inviting prospective applicants to voluntarily self-declare disability status, as well as request accommodations to participate in ABCs.
- d) Inform all newly appointed members of ABCs about required training on accessible customer service, as part of their welcome letter and orientation package.
- e) Promote awareness of accessibility in government newsletter such as training reminders, updates on standards, facts, promotion of course completion and tips.
- f) Continue to promote learning events to employees in celebration of Manitoba Access Awareness Week, Disability Employment Awareness Month, Indigenous Disability Awareness Month and International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- g) Create a centralized accessibility webpage for all staff that includes links to [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca), internal resources, trainings and learning events, DAC Terms of Reference (TOR) and updates on accessibility standards.
- h) Improve education, outreach and awareness of the Manitoba Accessibility Office in communities outside of Winnipeg by identifying and exploring potential private sector advertising opportunities.
- i) Complete the development and launch of a renewed, bilingual [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca) website.

5.5 Enhanced Accessibility of the Built Environment

- a) Adhere to the requirements of the Manitoba Building Code, providing access in a manner that does not establish or perpetuate differences based on a person's disability.
- b) Integrate barrier-free Universal Design principles and work environment accessibility when undertaking government projects for current and new buildings, leased spaces, upgrades and refreshes.
- c) Explore the addition of Beacon technology, a form of digital accessibility, to public areas to assist individuals with vision impairments.
- d) Provide reminders to all building managers that they need to provide notice when an environmental or accessibility feature will be available in a reduced capacity or entirely unavailable (includes parking, elevators, entrances, road or sidewalk construction).
- e) Continue to implement accessibility in out-of-door public spaces, including Provincial parks.

5.6 Leadership in Advancing Accessibility

- a) Reinforce the obligations under the AMA to over 52,000 businesses through paid advertising, social media and direct mail campaigns, including reminders about the opportunity to apply to the Manitoba Accessibility Fund
- b) Deliver the second Manitoba Accessibility Awards Program in 2023 (which takes place every two years) to celebrate leadership and innovation in meeting the needs of the one in four Manitobans affected by a disability.
- c) Conduct a review of all departments every two years, to ensure the Manitoba government is consistently meeting or exceeding standard requirements and acting as a leader and champion for accessibility legislation. Develop an action plan to address results of the review.
- d) Create a position that leads the advancement and coordination of accessibility initiatives across the MPS.
- e) Continue the role of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee to provide leadership across departments of the MGAP implementation.
- f) Continue the role of Accessibility Champion to provide ongoing leadership and support to executive and senior managers in understanding and achieving accessibility.
- g) Enhance the roles of Diversity Inclusion (DI) Champions and DACs within departments to advance accessibility initiatives.
- h) Review the role of DACs as an important strategy for revitalizing accessibility awareness and communication commitments within departments, including an enhanced onboarding process for new DACs.
- i) Develop a forum for DI Champions in collaboration with DACs to discuss accessibility issues and support the advancement of accessibility within departments.
- j) Provide additional corporate support to and communication with the Employee Network Group, CSWAN, to identify and address accessibility issues as they arise.
- k) Ensure that the principles of inclusive leadership are embedded into the content of all leadership programs.
- l) Recommend the addition of an inclusion statement on all call-outs for secondment opportunities, committees, and project teams to encourage diverse participation including employees with disabilities.

APPENDIX: 2021 AND 2022 MGAP ACHIEVEMENTS

The following outlines notable actions the Manitoba government undertook in 2021 and 2022 to advance accessibility across Manitoba's Public Service:

- Developed an interdepartmental working group to implement all recommendations in the Manitoba Accessibility Council's Customer Service Standard Review
- Created an Accessibility Toolkit as a reference guide to support all employees to enhance accessible customer service
- Implemented a new Diversity and Inclusion policy in support of The Public Service Act, proclaimed in February 2022, which is committed to achieving an inclusive public service at all levels in the organization. This includes ensuring public service policy, programs, and initiatives are inclusive, accessible, and equitable
- Continued to make investments in improvements to enhance the visitor experience in provincial parks by increasing the number of mobility mats at 11 provincial parks, which provide wheelchair access to designated beach areas
- Added accessible features to playgrounds in six campgrounds/provincial parks
- Continued improvements of accessibility at Hecla-Grindstone Provincial Park in the vacation cabins, boardwalk and several picnic shelters, and historic schoolhouse building
- Developed reference guides in Manitoba Justice to assist victims and witnesses as they navigate the legal process such as information related to wheelchair accessible transportation, captioning and real-time transcription (CART), note-takers and communication intermediary services
- Conducted assessments of courthouses in Winnipeg, Dauphin, Thompson, Selkirk and Portage la Prairie to identify accessibility barriers, with renovations to begin in 2023
- Amended The Jury Act in 2021 to ensure that persons with disabilities may be reasonably accommodated to serve on juries
- Completed renovations of the Winnipeg Law Courts building to support barrier-free access including a new entrance vestibule, upgraded public and staff receiving areas, new main universal washroom and the addition of new scooter-sized lift
- Loaned 5,813 Alternate Format Books (braille, large print, touch books, etc.), and 3,023 Alternate Format Online Downloads (audio & e-text titles downloaded through the online system) to teachers and students in Manitoba who require alternate formats
- Produced 31 audiobooks, 37 e-text books, 415 large print books, 224 braille books, and 198 units of handouts for teachers/students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 who required alternate formats for learning
- Produced 1,219 titles for Post-Secondary students who require alternate formats for their studies
- Participated in a loan agreement with agencies in other provinces to provide alternate format materials to support Kindergarten to Grade twelve students and post-secondary students across Canada

- Developed a consistent and transparent approach to formalizing flexible work arrangements, ensuring all parties have a full understanding of their obligations and responsibilities, including safety and health in the remote workplace, information security and records management.
- Hosted awareness events in celebration of Manitoba Access Awareness Week, International Day for Persons with Disabilities, Disability Employment Awareness Month and Indigenous Disability Awareness Month
- Provided ASL interpretation at all COVID-19 briefings
- Enhanced the internal reporting mechanism to track compliance with the AMA across MPS
- Re-launched the Career Gateway Program, an employment equity recruitment program designated for Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, and PWD
- Achieved an 86 per cent completion rate across MPS, with over 11,000 public servants having taken the AMA training