

Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan: 2019 and 2020

This document is available in alternate formats on request.

To request alternate formats or provide feedback about this plan, please contact the Civil 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.



Message from the Manitoba Government Accessibility Champion



Figure 1. Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee
From left: Dave Dyson, Jay Rodgers, Charlene Paquin and Fred Meier

As the Accessibility Champion for the Manitoba government, I am pleased to present you with our second Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan (MGAP) for 2019 and 2020 on behalf of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee (Steering Committee).

We have re-energized and refocused the Steering Committee, with membership from the top levels of our organization, including the Clerk of the Executive Council and colleague Deputy Ministers. The Steering Committee facilitates government-wide engagement, communication and collaboration in the promotion and implementation of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan. Our goal is to ensure this plan meets, and where possible exceeds, statutory requirements and public commitments under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) while ensuring fiscal responsibility and efficiency.

Under AMA, the Manitoba government must report on:

- Measures we have taken to identify, prevent and remove barriers.
- Measures we put in place to assess our policies, programs, services and legislation for the effect that they have on accessibility.
- Measures we intend to take to continue to identify, prevent and remove barriers.

To create our updated MGAP, we asked organizations that represent Manitobans with disabilities to provide us with key areas they would like us to focus on. We also consulted within our organization, seeking input from public servants at multiple levels. Based on this information, our updated MGAP includes identified barriers, accomplishments both big and small, unique initiatives planned and underway and ideas to build on and advance new, innovative and bold ways to improve accessibility.

The actions set out under this MGAP underpin the importance of inclusion in our public service, a key element in the [Transformation Strategy](#) released in February 2018.

Through the leadership of the Steering Committee, we will ensure that this plan leverages key partnerships and networks to remove barriers. We will increase public servants' awareness of and capacity to address accessibility issues and accommodations. This will in turn harness our talent and ensure we focus on the client by providing respectful, accessible services.

I look forward to co-leading with my colleagues the Manitoba public service in meeting our accessibility goals.

Sincerely,

Charlene Paquin
Accessibility Champion
Civil Service Commissioner

Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan (MGAP)

Timeframe

Date of first approval:

September 2016

Date updated:

December 2018

Applicable timeframe:

January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2020 (2019 and 2020)

Scope:

MGAP applies to the Manitoba government

Contact

Charlene Paquin

Accessibility Champion for the Manitoba government, Civil Service Commissioner

935 – 155 Carlton Street

Winnipeg, MB R3C 3H8

Phone: 204-945-2332

Manitoba Toll Free: 1-800-282-8069 ext. 2332

TDD/TTY: 204-945-1437

Email: accessibility@gov.mb.ca

Governance

Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee Members:

Fred Meier, Clerk of the Executive Council and Cabinet Secretary

Charlene Paquin, Accessibility Champion and Civil Service Commissioner

Jay Rodgers, Deputy Minister, Families and Director under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Dave Dyson, Deputy Minister, Growth, Enterprise and Trade

Signatures:

Original signed by

Fred Meier
Clerk of the Executive Council
Cabinet Secretary

Original signed by

Charlene Paquin
Accessibility Champion
Civil Service Commissioner

Statement of commitment

The Manitoba government is committed to ensuring that all Manitobans can be full and effective participants in society. We are committed to inclusion and meeting the needs of people who face barriers in ways that maintain dignity and independence.

The principles of access, equality, equity, universal design and systemic responsibility guide our policies, programs, practices and services.

Policies

The Manitoba government relies on a range of policies that promote accessibility and help identify, remove and prevent barriers.

Government's policy to meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standard Regulation is the [Manitoba Government Accessible Customer Service Policy](#). This policy provides overarching direction on ensuring accessible provision of services to Manitobans.

The Civil Service Commission's [Principles & Policies for Managing Human Resources](#) has a variety of policies that are relevant to accessibility for Manitoba government employees, such as the Reasonable Accommodation Policy and the Barrier-Free Recruitment Policy.

The Manitoba government applies the Manitoba Building Code and Universal Design principles to all Manitoba government new buildings and upgrades / refreshes to current buildings. The [Manitoba Building Code](#) is a regulation that adopts applicable sections of the National Building Code.

The Manitoba government is committed to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)'s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA. This standard provides for greater accessibility of Manitoba government websites.

Accessibility barriers

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act states that:

For a person who has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability, a barrier is anything that interacts with a disability in a way that may hinder a person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

In seeking input for this MGAP, accessibility barriers have been identified that present us with opportunities to improve accessibility:

Attitudinal:

- There is a need to improve employee awareness of accessibility barriers, accessible services and accommodations and requirements under the AMA and its regulations.
- Departments need to supplement the centralized AMA training with discussion and training on department-specific issues and barriers.

Information and communication, technological:

- We need to ensure that Manitoba government digital documents are created with accessibility features, for example, using headings and captions to describe images, such as photographs, text boxes or charts.
- Government communications need to reflect inclusive language.
- Manitoba government public websites need to meet the website guidelines that the Manitoba government has set as its target.

Physical:

- The Manitoba government operates buildings and spaces across the province and not all of them are fully accessible. Access is especially challenging when spaces are located in older or historic buildings.
- We require greater consistency across the Manitoba government public service in providing reasonable accommodations to access public offices and buildings that are not fully accessible.

Systemic:

- There is a need to enhance mechanisms to ensure inclusion of people with intersectional identities, for example, Indigenous people with disabilities or newcomers with disabilities.
- Greater consistency is required in offering accommodations to access government services, information and public events.

While barriers exist, the Manitoba government is moving in the right direction. We are on track to meet our commitments in 2020 and make significant progress toward achieving accessibility by 2023.

Achievements and continued efforts

In the first accessibility plan, barriers and actions to address them were identified. In this section, we provide an update on the measures taken and in place to assess our policies, programs, services, and practices. We share related actions we will take going forward to continue to prevent and remove barriers.

1. Policies, resources, and employee training

1.1. Reviewing and updating policies and tools to support accessible operations

In February 2018, we released our updated [Manitoba Government Accessible Customer Service Policy \(MGACSP\)](#). This merged our 2008 Manitoba Policy on Access to Government Publications, Events, and Services and our 2016 Accessible Customer Service Policy. This streamlining of policies simplifies our approach to realizing our requirements under the Customer Service Standard Regulation. The MGACSP instructs the quality of interaction between government departments and people who face barriers when they access our information or services and participate in our events (including public meetings).

We are refreshing the Reasonable Accommodation Policy to include a supervisor guide and an employee guide. These guides will build on existing competencies of Manitoba public servants to improve their understanding of the process of requesting and providing workplace accommodations.

In September 2017, a gender and diversity analysis tool was launched. The Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat and the Civil Service Commission led public service partners in co-creating this self-directed learning resource. Through a variety of access points, Manitoba government employees can locate information on developing policy and programs through different lenses, including the perspective of people with disabilities. Links to the AMA are included in this resource.

Going forward: The Civil Service Commission (CSC), which encompasses internal human resource services experts, will continue to review and update human resource policies, programs, guidelines and information resources as best and promising practices, as well as evidence-based research emerge to direct changes. This work will be ongoing.

In early 2019, a revised corporate accessibility toolkit will be available to all Manitoba government public servants. The improved toolkit will include checklists and templates to advise the public when accessibility features are unavailable, guidelines for communicating in ways to meet the needs of persons facing barriers, and an updated list of support services available in Manitoba. These resources will help employees better identify, prevent and remove barriers.

We will seek mechanisms to promote the use of the gender and diversity tool, including incorporating it in policy and program development guides and in submissions seeking central government approval.

We will review our diversity and inclusion training material to enhance the focus on intersectionality.

Lead: Civil Service Commission

Associated timelines: Early 2019 (accessibility toolkit); ongoing (gender and diversity tool; diversity and inclusion training)

1.2. Accessibility Champion and supports

The Manitoba government's Accessibility Champion will provide leadership and support to executive and senior managers in understanding and achieving accessibility, and engage employees in increasing awareness about providing accessible services. The champion will also encourage departments in achieving goals identified in this plan.

Each department has designated employees to participate on a network of the Department Accessibility Coordinators (DACs). These coordinators support management in a variety of ways to enhance awareness of accessible services and implement the requirements of the AMA and related standards (regulations). For example:

- DACs support their colleagues to respond effectively and efficiently to public requests for information and services in alternate formats.
- The DAC from the Department of Sustainable Development led a training session on requirements under the AMA. All administrative front-line employees – approximately 150 employees – attended the session.

Other efforts demonstrate improved accessibility in customer service and accessible operations, such as:

- The Manitoba government held the first ever fully accessible budget consultation process in October 2017. Budget consultation in 2018 also provided an access offer.
- “Access Offer” (also called an “Active Offer”) signs and posters are widely distributed and posted throughout Manitoba government service areas. This helps remind public servants that they have the responsibility to deliver accessible services and ensures that members of the public are aware of their right to reasonable accommodation in the receipt of our services.

Going forward: Starting in 2019, the Manitoba government will increase employee awareness of accessibility barriers and accommodations, by promoting the use of resources and tools. Please refer to the section titled **Advancing new initiatives** on page 20 for more information on leaders' roles in improving awareness.

The Manitoba government will further promote the use and understanding of the “Access Offer” statement on public documents, in reception areas and for public meetings.

Leads: Department Accessibility Coordinators (DACs)

Associated timelines: Starting in 2019, ongoing

1.3. Training

The CSC developed an online course on the AMA and the provision of accessible customer service. All Manitoba government employees are required to take this course.

As of October 31, 2018, 61 per cent of all active Manitoba government employees had completed the course.

The CSC updated the Corporate Orientation and the Diversity and Inclusion at Work online course to include references to the AMA.

Departments reported that they have supplemented this mandatory training with their own education and awareness efforts. Highlights include:

- Agriculture and Growth, Enterprise and Trade both held training sessions on how to create accessible documents.
- Agriculture presented on the AMA at a public conference, providing information and outreach to 59 rural organizations that host fairs, festivals and activities.
- Families held workshops for employees, providing demonstrations by two persons with disabilities using assistive technology.
- Sustainable Development hosted a webinar session on accessibility barriers and encouraged employees to view an informational video on service animals.
- Finance employees participated in a procurement and accessibility seminar.

Going forward: More work is required to ensure full compliance with the training requirement under the Customer Service Standard Regulation. The Manitoba government will introduce measures to ensure that all staff complete the mandatory training by December 31, 2019.

Additional information on providing accessible customer service will be available to all employees in early 2019 in the new accessibility toolkit.

As we introduce new accessibility standards, including the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation in early 2019, we will update our training material and resources including new training to develop employees' technical skills in creating accessible digital documents. We will also develop a suite of easy-to-use tools and resources (e.g. handbooks, checklists and fact sheets) to assist Manitoba employers to achieve compliance with the Accessible Employment Standard.

Lead: Civil Service Commission (internal training); Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) (development of tools and resources)

Associated timelines: December 31, 2019 (internal training); early 2019 (development of tools and resources)

2. Accessibility operations and practices

2.1 Establishing a feedback process, Manitoba Government Inquiry practices

Communications Services Manitoba (CSM), in collaboration with department leads, established an accessibility feedback process through the [Accessible Government Services](#) link to [Manitoba Government Inquiry \(MGI\)](#).

An “accessibility” link to the Accessible Government Services page is provided at the bottom of every page of Manitoba government websites. Anyone can report accessibility issues they had when participating in Manitoba government programs and services. The goal is to achieve efficient and timely resolution of concerns.

MGI may assist persons with disabilities to locate the appropriate office, building or service to accommodate their needs. MGI maintains a database of information to answer questions that come in multiple formats: calls, emails, online chats and tweets. MGI staff may assist the public in filling out forms or navigating a website. If an inquiry requires more detailed, specific information, MGI redirects the request to the area that can provide a response. MGI also serves as the government’s main switchboard.

MGI uses various resources, such as the online phone book, to answer questions from the public about which buildings are accessible; it also maintains and updates the online phone book in partnership with Manitoba government employees.

Going forward: We will continue to promote and expand the use of our feedback processes, to make it clear to Manitobans that we welcome feedback on the accessibility of our programs and services.

The Manitoba government will ensure that MGI continues to provide accessibility information to the public and will track accessibility requests.

Leads: Communications Services Manitoba

Associated timelines: December 31, 2020

2.2 Accessible administration

In 2017, an initial review of the General Manual of Administration (GMA) verified that the manual’s provisions did not conflict with accessibility efforts.

Going forward: The Manitoba government’s Treasury Board Secretariat has initiated another, more comprehensive review of the GMA with a targeted completion date of February 2019. In this review, an accessibility lens will be used to ensure that the manual continues to align with accessibility efforts.

Lead: Treasury Board Secretariat

Associated timelines: February 2019

2.3 Procurement practices

The Sustainable Procurement Manitoba Working Group (Working Group) includes public purchasers who support sustainable procurement in Manitoba. The Manitoba government is a member through various departments, including Manitoba Finance's Procurement Services Branch. Membership includes public sector organizations from Crown corporations, local governments, school divisions and colleges.

The Working Group supports sustainable procurement practices across public sector organizations. In 2016, the Working Group added accessibility considerations into its procurement activities and its [web-based tool](#), which provides practical knowledge and guidance to public purchasers.

One new tool added to the website in 2017 was a [Procurement Checklist to Support Accessibility](#). The checklist provides accessibility considerations for procuring goods and services, for identifying scope of work and tendering, for request for proposal documents and for the built environment.

A number of areas included accessibility in procurement and grant funding processes:

- CSM requests in its procurement that all public communications and print items, websites and other materials meet international guidelines for web accessibility (WCAG 2.0 Level AA).
- In a 2018 Request for Expressions of Interest, the Housing Division of Manitoba Families included an accessible and visitable component for the Redevelopment of Manitoba Housing land at Mayfair and River Avenue in Winnipeg.
- In the 2017/18 intake of applications for project funding from Community Development Programs, Municipal Relations included special consideration for accessibility and reducing barriers.

Going forward: The Manitoba government will continue to support the Working Group in maintaining its sustainable procurement website. This will ensure that our partners can add new accessibility information to the [Goods and Services](#) procurement website. Public purchasers will be informed of accessibility related issues to consider when procuring specific goods and services, such as apparel, marketing and communications, or electronics.

Please refer to the section called **Advancing new initiatives** on page 20 for more information on procurement.

Lead: Procurement Services Branch in Finance

Associated timelines: Ongoing

2.4. Review of accommodation resources management

Through a Treasury Board Secretariat review, the Manitoba government found that departments have been managing the costs associated with providing accommodations for employees with disabilities from within their own budgets.

This item is completed.

2.5. Removing barriers

Departments have been proactively identifying and removing barriers and increasing accessibility for the public and for employees.

For example, Manitoba Finance removed the use of italics in its templates for Annual Reports and Supplementary Information Legislative Reviews, removing communication barriers and improving accessibility of Manitoba government information. Finance also lowered desks in some service and reception areas to improve access to services.

In 2017, as part of the Department of Sustainable Development's provincial park improvements, Birds Hill Park Beach introduced an accessible "matted" pathway from the concrete sidewalk over the beach to the water's edge. In August 2018, St. Malo Provincial Park became the second provincial beach in Manitoba to incorporate a non-slip, portable, roll-out pathway to the water.

Manitoba Education and Training supported and promoted the employment of people with disabilities by providing special accommodations for Apprenticeship Manitoba clients with disabilities as they took their exams, including time extensions, using an interpreter or a reader, private sitting, modified exam format or use of other adaptive devices.

The Manitoba Women's Advisory Council released a report March 8, 2018 entitled "[The Status of Manitoba Women](#)," which highlighted the lack of data regarding women in with disabilities in a number of areas including education, health and violence against women. On April 20, 2018, Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat held a roundtable with women with disabilities at the Independent Living Resource Centre to discuss barriers to supporting survivors of sexual violence.

Manitoba Housing promoted visitable¹ and accessible housing design through various programs and initiatives. Of land that is currently under development for Bridgwater Lakes and Bridgwater Trails residential neighbourhoods, 50 per cent of the lots are graded for basic accessible housing.

Going forward: The Manitoba government will continue to improve the accessibility of spaces and equipment and, in particular, will align with efforts in support of the Transformation Strategy. For example, Manitoba Justice will implement videoconferencing as a boardroom upgrade that adds an accessibility option, allowing people to not have to travel to the Consumer Protection Division offices for hearings.

¹ "Visitable Housing" is the concept of designing and building homes with basic accessibility. Visitable homes provide no step access on the main level, wider doorways and hallways, and an accessible washroom on the main floor. Visitable housing does not mean fully accessible. Accessible housing means move-in ready for a person with a disability, whereas visitable housing offers a convenient home for residents and a welcoming environment for visitors of all ages and mobility.

The Residential Tenancies Board received funding to install smart TVs and associated equipment in hearing rooms located in Winnipeg, Brandon and in the Thompson office. This improvement is expected to improve accessibility:

- By allowing landlords/tenants/witnesses to participate in hearings and mediations, who may have a disability that prevents them from attending a hearing or mediation in person.
- By displaying evidence (photos, documents, etc.) on a large TV monitor, rather than parties having to gather around a small laptop monitor.

The Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat will continue to collaborate with women with disabilities, including women in the Deaf community to ensure prevention and intervention initiatives are inclusive.

Manitoba Housing will continue to promote visitable and accessible housing in new housing development and in upgraded public housing rental units. Examples include:

- In Gimli, Manitoba Housing committed to develop 40 seniors housing units with a basic accessibility component.
- Bridgwater Trails will contain 1,000 units of rental housing units built to visitable standards.
- Bridgwater Forest will include approximately 40 single family homes and over 200 multi-family housing units, both to visitable standards.

The Manitoba government as a whole will also engage Department Accessibility Coordinators to assess how to improve accessibility in areas that serve the public, including by considering diverse disabilities such as those affecting sight, hearing, wayfinding,² mental health, pain management, chemical sensitivity and the size of an individual.

Two research projects will be conducted by the Department of Families, one focusing on accessibility of single family housing and the other on ways in which government can improve how it provides assistive devices and supplies to Manitobans with disabilities.

Leads: Justice (videoconferencing, smart TVs and equipment); Manitoba Status of Women (collaborating with women with disabilities); Families (visitable and accessible housing; research projects); all departments (accessible customer service);

Associated timelines: Ongoing

3. Employment of persons with disabilities

² Wayfinding can be defined as spatial problem solving. It is knowing where you are in a building or an environment, knowing where your desired location is and knowing how to get there from your present location. Wayfinding systems guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space.

3.1 Employer awareness of accessibility issues

The Manitoba government enhances employer awareness through a variety of special proclamations and celebrations. These events highlight the responsibility of employers to improve accessibility for their employees and for their customers.

The Manitoba government proclaims one week every June as Access Awareness Week and hosts learning events to celebrate and advance awareness. For example, in 2018, the Manitoba government presented on its accessibility and inclusion efforts at an international round table on disability in the Francophone context. Manitoba government also held a free symposium targeting businesses and organizations in advance of their November 2018 deadline to comply with the Customer Service Standard Regulation.

Manitoba proclaims each October as Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM). In Winnipeg, DEAM is anchored by the employabilityExpo, bringing together employers, people with disabilities and service providers to promote employment of people with disabilities. The Manitoba government has provided funding to the Manitoba Tourism Education Council to support the employabilityExpo.

Departments marked these occasions with their own events. For example, the CSC promoted attendance at a digital accessibility webinar to celebrate the 2018 DEAM. Sustainable Development hosted a webinar during Access Awareness Week, with a focus on the Customer Service Standard Regulation and the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation for inclusion in the workplace.

Going forward: As requirements related to the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation come into effect, we will strategically use these special events and innovative initiatives to highlight the benefits of employment of people with disabilities. This work will be ongoing.

Leads: Departments of Families (DIO); Growth, Enterprise and Trade; Education and Training

Associated timelines: Ongoing annually in June and October

4. The Manitoba government as an employer

4.1. Access Offer and accommodations

Government includes the “Access Offer” in all steps in the recruitment and hiring process, including invitations to job interviews, assessments and employment letters of offer.

We also updated the Employee Orientation Checklist to require supervisors to discuss accommodation needs with new employees. Supervisors review the Reasonable Accommodation Policy with new employees.

The Employee Orientation Checklist now reflects the soon-to-be established requirement for emergency and evacuation plans for employees who require accommodations, under the Accessible Employment Regulation.

Human Resource Consultants are available to provide ongoing training, education and consultation to management on accessibility needs for employees. This helps supervisors to understand their responsibilities to provide an active offer of accommodation.

Going forward: The new Accessible Employment Standard Regulation will come into effect for government before other sectors, targeted for early 2020. The Manitoba Government is committed to being a leader in accessible employment. We will develop employer handbooks, checklists, fact sheets and other tools and resources to ensure that government is fully compliant 12 months after the standard is passed. These tools and resources will also assist other sectors meet compliance requirements in 2021 and 2022.

Human resource policies, programs, guidelines and information resources in support of the new accessibility standard for employment will be reviewed. The goal is to remove barriers throughout recruitment, retention and promotion processes, as well as in learning and development opportunities.

We will compile an Assistive Technology Resource Catalogue for managers and supervisors that highlights the array of devices available to meet the needs of employees who request accommodations. This resource will be completed in 2019.

On an ongoing basis, our internal information and communications technology service provider will work with departments to select technologies that are compatible with the government technical environment. They will source appropriate technologies to meet public servants' needs by working with the appropriate business units and experts to define requirements.

Leads: Civil Service Commission (review accommodation policy and Assistive Technology Resource Catalogue); Business Transformation and Technology (select compatible technologies)

Associated timelines: Early 2020 (review policies); 2019 (Assistive Technology Resource Catalogue)

4.2. Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

We have taken steps to improve awareness of workplace accessibility within our organization. Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy's vision is to achieve an exemplary public service that is inclusive and reflective of the population it serves.

The strategy's primary objectives are:

1. To recruit from a diverse, qualified group of potential applicants to build a representative workforce, at all levels of the organization.

2. To identify and remove employment barriers to enable the full participation of all employees.
3. To cultivate a culture that motivates individuals to contribute to their full potential and build a career with a high-performing Manitoba government.

Going forward: Government will continue to strive toward a public service that reflects the diversity in Manitoba's population. With the new Accessible Employment Standard, the Accessibility Champion will further promote inclusion within our workplaces so that they are increasingly welcoming of diversity, including persons with disabilities.

Leads: Civil Service Commission; all departments

Associated timelines: Ongoing

4.3. Employee learning and support

The Civil Servants with Abilities Network (CSWAN) is a volunteer network of employees with visible or invisible disabilities, their supervisors and any public servants interested in supporting and mentoring the career goals, professional development and social inclusion of employees with disabilities. CSWAN significantly increased its membership from 60 employees in 2016/17 to 230 employees in 2017/18.

With support from the CSC, CSWAN encourages the full inclusion and professional development of employees with disabilities and hosts learning activities, including workshops, discussion forums and seminars, as well as networking and social events to support inclusion. For example, in 2018, CSWAN in collaboration with the CSC coordinated a learning event entitled "Workplace Accessibility and You! How The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) Affects Our Work" to celebrate International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

Some departments have piloted their own unique accessibility opportunities. For instance, Growth, Enterprise and Trade is working to enhance employment access internally by developing the in-House Opportunity Placement (iHOP). This innovative initiative will offer department staff an opportunity to sit on the department's Accessibility Working Group to develop a plan to promote accessibility in the workplace, events and materials, as well as other opportunities to heighten awareness and increase the ability to identify barriers to access.

Going forward: We will seek and promote successful opportunities to support employee learning and awareness of reasonable accommodation and accessibility. Please see the section **Advancing new initiatives** on page 20 for more information on improving awareness and supporting diversity and inclusion in the Manitoba government.

Leads: Civil Service Commission; all departments

Associated timelines: Ongoing

5. Information and communications actions

5.1. Writing style guide

The Manitoba government added a new section on web accessibility to the “Communications Services Manitoba Writing Style Guide” to provide advice to employees on drafting written material for the public. The guide includes information on using bias-free language.

Going forward: We will update this resource with additional information to support the accessibility of all communications as new accessibility standards become law.

Leads: Communications Services Manitoba

Associated timelines: In advance of new accessibility standards coming into force

5.2. Website policies and audits

The Manitoba government’s goal is to adhere to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA. Although departments are responsible for their own web content, there are multiple avenues for employees to ensure that the Manitoba government meets this standard.

- An upgrade to Microsoft Office 2016 provides employees with an accessibility checker, a built-in resource for staff to create accessible documents.
- In October 2016, a new team of departmental web coordinators formed WebHQ and launched online resources for employees. WebHQ provides:
 - Links to accessibility tools and resources for creating more accessible documents and websites, including accessibility checkers for documents and websites.
 - Information on best practices for web standards and digital technologies.
 - Webinar and in-person training on accessibility related themes.
- CSM provides another central resource to ensure accessible documents and websites.
CSM:
 - Offers advice and recommendations for the production of accessible PDFs for web posting.
 - Developed guidelines and templates to ensure department digital communications such as websites, applications, videos, social media channels and PDF documents follow adopted accessibility standards.
 - Ensures accessibility standards are met for all corporate social media channels, websites and PDF documents.
- Employees can consult with web subject matter experts in Business Transformation and Technology (BTT) and CSM and can work with BTT and CSM to engage an external vendor to provide assistance in making existing or new websites compliant with web accessibility standards.

Some departments, such as Families and Sustainable Development, have done extensive work to make their public websites more accessible. Others, such as Growth, Enterprise and Trade

and Education and Training, have taken a continuous improvement approach, and updated websites on a priority basis.

Going forward: We will promote accessibility online on our Manitoba government main page, other government portals and on social media channels.

All departments will continue to monitor and update their websites to meet the standard, and will start preparing for the future accessibility standard in information and communications technology. This will include:

- Reviewing current services offered within existing YouTube and other social media platforms to ensure closed captioning for livestreamed events are offered.
- Looking at ways to improve accessibility standards when using images on social media channels.
- Ensuring content meets accessibility standards by using and updating to approved software products.
- Keeping up to date with accessibility standards, such as WCAG 2.1.

BTT will apply the appropriate technical standards and configurations of sites that Manitoba controls. As technology is replaced, improvements to meet accessibility requirements will be considered.

Leads: Communications Services Manitoba (promote accessibility); all departments (monitor and update websites); Business Transformation and Technology (technology)

Associated timelines: Ongoing, to December 31, 2020

6. Barrier-free universal design

6.1. Manitoba government buildings

Manitoba adopts applicable sections of the National Building Code by regulation. The Manitoba Building Code and Universal Design principles guide us in day-to-day procedures respecting Manitoba government buildings. This includes new buildings, leased spaces and upgrades or refreshes to current buildings. Standard procedure involves a broad range of design concepts, including the design of products, spaces and environments to provide access in a way that respects all abilities.

The Manitoba government's Accommodation Services Division introduced Office Space Planning Standards in 2011 and continually updates the standards to meet Manitoba Building Code and industry standards. These standards apply to all Manitoba government departments, agencies and special operating agencies. Some of these standards specify barrier-free access as per Universal Design principles, and include:

- Standard work stations, furniture layouts and meeting rooms are sized and arranged to accommodate accessible, barrier-free turning radius.

- Reception area workstations and counter heights and clearances in coffee stations are to meet accessibility standards.

As part of the preparation of Budget 2018, Manitoba government's Treasury Board Secretariat introduced a new Capital Review Framework to evaluate and prioritize infrastructure projects. In this new process, projects using qualitative criteria including applying an accessibility lens are prioritized.

The Manitoba government incorporates audible and visual fire alarm systems in all government-owned and leased buildings.

Going forward: On an ongoing basis, the Manitoba government will continue to integrate accessibility, including alarm systems, into its government buildings, as well as into programming and policies to ensure accessibility remains a standard procedure for new buildings and upgrades or refreshes to current buildings.

The Manitoba government will continue to consider accessibility in all outdoor public spaces, such as campgrounds, when undertaking any new project where reasonable to do so, and in particular as Manitoba introduces new standards for the design of public spaces in 2020.

Leads: Accommodation Services Division in Finance (government buildings); Sustainable Development (outdoor public spaces)

Associated timelines: Ongoing, as new accessibility standards come into force

6.2. Accessibility upgrades

Some Manitoba government properties and offices have had upgrades or have moved to new locations to improve the accessibility of the physical space. Examples include upgrading washrooms for accessibility, adding power door buttons to entryways, revising the layout of spaces to accommodate persons of all abilities and completing elevator projects.

Major accessibility upgrades to the Legislative Chamber of the Manitoba Legislative Building completed in October 2017 showed that accessibility can be achieved without sacrificing historical architectural integrity. The overall project won the Winnipeg Conservation and Heritage Award while the Manitoba Legislative Chamber was short-listed for the Project Managers' Institute Project of the Year.

In 2017, government also completed award winning accessibility upgrades to the Manitoba Law Courts, which included a new wheelchair-specific elevator and an accessible washroom installed on the main floor.

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living surveyed each of its six office locations to learn more about barriers and developed an action plan to address them. The department installed accessibility equipment, such as ramps and automatic doors, to ensure accessible delivery of public services.

Going forward: We will continue with our standard procedures for Accommodation Services Division. This means we will continue to be guided by the National Building Code, the Manitoba Building Code and Universal Design standards. Consideration of barrier-free Universal Design principles and work environment accessibility will continue to take place when undertaking any project for new buildings, leased space and upgrading or refreshing any current building.

Leads: Accommodation Services Division in Finance

Associated timelines: December 31, 2020

Advancing new initiatives

The Manitoba government is committed to changing its culture through transformation. By weaving accessibility into the fabric of our daily work and by championing accessibility as an internal commitment to and for public servants, the Manitoba government will transform its work so that accessibility underpins approaches to client-centred service. In addition to the actions in the “Going forward” sections of this plan, we will also prioritize efforts in four areas in the next two years.

1. Accessibility leadership from the top

The Manitoba government will lead accessibility by example. Our Accessibility Champion and the other senior leaders on the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee will encourage and promote the implementation of this plan, while keeping us on track toward meeting its goals. The Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee will provide accessibility leadership and support to public servants throughout the whole organization.

Through ongoing events, knowledge exchanges, discussion forums and workshops, these leaders will advance accessibility awareness and education, with the goal of ensuring that all public servants know how to meet or exceed obligations under the AMA and are working to implement accessibility and accommodation.

Led by the Accessibility Champion, the Manitoba Government Steering Committee will foster public servants’ awareness on how to provide accessible customer service and continue to foster employment accessibility under the new Accessible Employment Standard Regulation. In 2019, we will launch a corporate-wide Accessibility Awareness Campaign to energize public servants about accessibility issues. This will include:

- Promoting accessibility through blogs, videos, posters, emails or presentations. Our leadership, including the Clerk of the Executive Council and the Accessibility Champion, will send accessibility related resources, tools and promotional material to all Manitoba government public servants.
- Reinvigorating and engaging employee networks.
- Better equipping senior managers with resources to ensure public servants are able to provide accessible services and know where to find additional resources. This includes

our continued work to update the tools in the accessibility toolkit for supervisors and employees.

- Renewing efforts to encourage use of an accessibility lens for employees who prepare requests for central government approval and review current policies and programs.
- Holding an Accessibility Awareness Contest for employees to create and celebrate innovative ideas to prevent or remove accessibility barriers.

Leads: Civil Service Commission and Disabilities Issues Office (support Steering Committee)

Associated timelines: Ongoing, starting in 2019

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and full compliance with requirements under the Customer Service Standard Regulation and the Accessible Employment Standard Regulation.
- Increased identification of barriers, as well as continued and improved ways to prevent and remove barriers.
- Provision of more accessible services.

2. Supporting diversity and inclusion in the Manitoba government

The Accessible Employment Standard Regulation under the AMA will come into force for the Manitoba government over the next year. To support diversity and inclusion within the public sector, the Manitoba Government will strive to meet, and where possible exceed, statutory obligations under the Accessibility Standard for Employment. On an ongoing basis, we will:

- Review and update existing Manitoba government policies and practices to ensure they respect the needs of employees and applicants who experience barriers in the workplace. This will include developing individual accommodation plans for affected employees and working with decision-makers to approve the use of more accessible templates for internal documents, such as briefing notes and central government submission templates.
- Develop new training for our supervisors, managers and recruiters about the new or modified employment requirements.
- Prioritize workplace safety for all staff by establishing training for leaders so that they know what to do to support employees affected by barriers in workplace emergencies.
- Draft tools to assess and improve recruitment and workplace success of public servants affected by barriers.

Leads: Civil Service Commission; all departments

Associated timelines: Ongoing, as new standard for employment comes into force

Expected Outcomes:

- Met or exceeded requirements under the new Accessible Employment Standard Regulation.
- Increased percentage of public servants self-identifying as employees with disabilities.

- Managers, supervisors and recruiters having a deeper understanding of reasonable accommodation in employment.

3. Accessible communications and engagement

In the 2018 Transformation Strategy, we identified that engaging with Manitobans is an essential element of a healthy public service. We are committed to continuing to simplify and enhance how we reach out to all Manitobans to ask for input on our programs or services.

To advance our commitment to create a centralized consultation portal, we are currently building capacity and tools to support employees in how they engage with the public. The Transformation Strategy stated that engagement is facilitated by a commitment to transparency and ease of access.

In 2019/20, we will launch an internal campaign, led by DACs with the support of public engagement experts from across the Manitoba government, to promote and advance accessible communications and engagement with Manitobans. This team will:

- Use and share the resources provided in the Accessibility Toolkit, which will be available for employees in 2019.
- Promote the use of the Access Offer sign at customer service counters that asks “How can we help?” with the message: “We can offer service in different ways.”
- Support employees in organizing and hosting consultations so they are accessible to all Manitobans. This will include strategies and innovative ways to spread the message to employees to encourage them in:
 - Offering alternate formats on all material used, whether online, at meetings, or in larger consultation sessions or town halls.
 - Offering accommodations to consultation participants in advance.
 - Selecting accessible venues.
- Educate employees so that they can create accessible print and digital documents, images, graphs and forms. This will include drafting guidelines on how employees can create accessible website content, and specialized training as required.

Leads: Civil Service Commission; Disabilities Issues Office; Department Accessibility Coordinators; All departments

Associated timelines: 2019/20

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved provision of accessible customer service by Manitoba public sector employees.
- Increased number of government service areas that have Access Offer sign and know how to implement.
- Improved accessibility for Manitobans in public meetings.
- Enhanced ability among Manitoba government employees to plan and host accessible public events.

4. Embed accessibility into procurement practices and funding

The Manitoba government is in the early stages of a major government procurement modernization and transformation initiative with the goal of making significant changes to government-wide procurement policy. Through this initiative, we will work to incorporate accessibility criteria into our procurement policies and practices by continuing with the following work:

- Accessibility considerations are a priority area for changes in the Procurement Administration Manual (PAM).
- Information and best practices will help inform and shape Manitoba's procurement practices including the creation of a procurement accessibility policy in the manual.

Individual departments will also be encouraged to include accessibility considerations in grant funding applications from external, third party service providers.

Leads: Procurement Services Branch in Finance (procurement practices); Treasury Board Secretariat (procurement practices); all departments (considering accessibility in grant funding)

Associated timeline: Ongoing

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced accessibility in services provided by external third party service providers.
- Enhanced accessibility related to the acquisition of goods and services through public procurement modernization.

A note on compliance and enforcement

Compliance and enforcement provisions in The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) encourage the Manitoba government to develop an approach to ensure obligated organizations are meeting requirements. A formal approach, described as a "compliance framework," will assist Manitoba in monitoring compliance and applying the compliance and enforcement provisions of the AMA.

The framework uses a progressive approach to compliance assessment and enforcement activities. The goal of the draft compliance framework is to provide organizations with support, with an emphasis on "educating into compliance." Government will show leadership when it comes to the implementation of accessibility standards by:

- Sending notices and/or letters to organizations, associations and stakeholders to inform and remind them of upcoming compliance deadlines. These notices and letters will include sector specific information.
- Launching targeted outreach and awareness campaigns, using a variety of communication vehicles.
- Developing, refining and sharing tools and resources for obligated organizations.

Research shows that one of the best ways to support regulatory compliance is to provide early and ongoing education and resources to affected stakeholders. As new standards come into effect for each sector, these efforts will support them to comply with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Manitoba's compliance efforts and activities will be ongoing and continuous as we strive to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility for all.

Conclusion

As accessibility standards come into effect for the Manitoba government before other sectors, this updated MGAP aligns whole-of-government initiatives to empower leadership and innovators at all levels across the public service to improve outcomes for Manitobans who face accessibility barriers.

Collectively, the Manitoba public service identified and selected action items to advance over the next two years. For each action item going forward, leads and timelines for completion were identified. Some action items will be achieved within the coming months, while others will be ongoing, through to 2021. Government will track its progress on the measures set out in this plan and prepare update reports for consideration by the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee. We recognize that our commitment to significant achievement toward accessibility by 2023 requires diligence. The next two years will be busy as we continue to strive towards a Manitoba public service that is inclusive and accessible to Manitobans and employees.

Appendix: List of acronyms used

AC – Accessibility Champion

AMA – The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

BTT – Business Transformation and Technology

CSC – Civil Service Commission

CSWAN – Civil Servants with Abilities Network

CSM – Communications Services Manitoba

DAC – Department Accessibility Coordinators

DEAM – Disability Employment Awareness Week

DIO – Disabilities Issues Office

GMA – General Manual of Administration

MGACSP – Manitoba Government Accessible Customer Service Policy

MGAP – Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan

MGI – Manitoba Government Inquiry

PAM – Procurement Administration Manual

W3C – World Wide Web Consortium

WCAG – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines