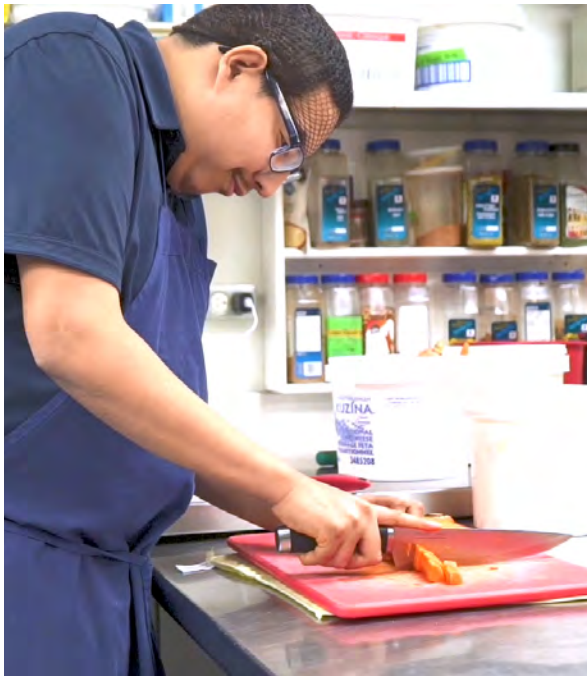


MINISTER'S ANNUAL PLAN 2021/22 & 2022/23

THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT





This document is available in alternate formats on request.

Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office:

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF FAMILIES

As Minister of Families and Minister responsible for Accessibility, I am pleased to share the government's plans to implement The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) during the fiscal years April 1 to March 31, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Recent surveys indicate that Manitoba businesses and non-profit organizations join Manitobans with disabilities in their desire to live in an inclusive, accessible and flourishing province. The Manitoba government remains committed to achieving this outcome, especially as we emerge from a global pandemic.



Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the barriers to daily activities caused by COVID-19 have created a broader understanding about the importance of facilitating access to goods and services and assuring accessible employment. Simple solutions or “accommodations” have resulted in small but significant innovations, such as curbside pickup, home delivery, and online consultations. Furthermore, in order to maintain services and the economy, many of us have been working from home. Manitobans with disabilities have pointed out the parallels with the barriers they experienced long before the pandemic struck, and were helpful in identifying solutions. The Manitoba government is proud of its efforts to maintain accessibility during COVID-19 by applying the AMA’s accessibility standards. Going forward, the government’s commitment remains to its citizens in transitioning to a post-COVID Manitoba and ensuring that accessibility remains at the forefront of these plans.

I am particularly pleased to use this opportunity to announce the Manitoba Accessibility Fund, which will provide grants to businesses, non-profit organizations, municipalities and others to help make Manitoba accessible for everyone. As described in this plan, the government will continue to provide foundational tools and training to support each of the accessibility standards (regulations), and to build public awareness about an #AccessibleMB.

In the next two years, the government will also complete the development of standards under the AMA, with the final consultation and establishment of the three remaining standards, targeting information and communications, transportation and the accessible design of public spaces.

The AMA commits government to achieving significant progress by 2023. Beginning with the five-year review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, during spring 2021, this plan builds on our strengths, hones our drive, and unites us in our efforts to make significant strides over the next two years. The ultimate goal is a Manitoba that is accessible and inclusive to everyone.

Sincerely,

Honourable Rochelle Squires Minister of Families, Minister responsible for Accessibility, and Minister of Francophone Affairs



SUMMARY: OUR COMMITMENTS TO YOU

Manitoba Accessibility Fund to support community and business initiatives beginning in 2022/23, with targeted stakeholder consultation in 2021/22 to ensure maximum impact of the new fund ([Section 1](#)).

review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Spring 2021 ([Section 3](#))

consultation on the remaining three standards and enactment of these standards in 2023 ([Section 3](#))

introduction of an online learning portal in 2021, to support AMA learning and training opportunities, anytime from anywhere ([Section 4](#))

ongoing webinar training opportunities until in-person workshops and presentations resume ([Section 4](#))

proactive awareness raising and support of compliance measures under the AMA ([Section 5](#))

implementation of strategic compliance projects, such as dedicated reviews and audits of accessibility plans and policies ([Section 5](#))

SUMMARY: OUR COMMITMENTS TO YOU - CONTINUED

continued focus on maintaining accessibility in the government and private sector response to the pandemic ([Section 6](#))

offering the second Manitoba Accessibility Awards in 2022/23 ([Section 6](#))

updates to AccessibilityMB.ca to enhance user experience, improve efficiency, and increase understanding of the AMA and its benefits ([Section 6](#))

continued production of an electronic newsletter to serve as a key public awareness and education resource for Manitoba organizations and individuals ([Section 6](#))

A new communications strategy that promotes accessibility in a variety of ways, including accessible online methods ([Section 6](#))



1. ANNOUNCING: MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY FUND

One of the most frequent requests from stakeholders wishing to comply with accessibility standards is the need for financial assistance. The Manitoba government has heard you and has responded with the creation of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund.

The purpose of the Manitoba Accessibility Fund is to provide annual, sustainable grant-making activity for initiatives that promote the principles of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), and to assist Manitoba organizations that must comply.

The Manitoba government thanks the Winnipeg Foundation for hosting this \$20 million Endowment Fund. The Fund will make it possible to distribute over \$500,000 annually beginning in 2022/23.

MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY FUND - CONTINUED

Eligible activities include,

- o Raising awareness of how people are disabled by barriers
- o Promoting and encouraging the prevention and removal of barriers
- o Integrating accessibility standards into the activities of Manitoba organizations
- o Creating campaigns, and events to promote public awareness
- o Developing tools, resources and training to enhance compliance

In the future, the Manitoba Accessibility Fund will also apply to infrastructure investments that may be required by accessibility standards still under development. These investments could include improvements in web accessibility, design of outdoor spaces, and accessible transportation.

Organizations that have obligations under the AMA are eligible to apply for grants. These include non-profit organizations, businesses, municipalities, professional associations, and public sector bodies.

Beginning in 2021/22, the government will develop the guidelines for the grant and seek feedback from stakeholders on how to ensure the Manitoba Accessibility Fund has the broadest possible impact in creating a more accessible province.

Our Commitment to You

Manitoba Accessibility Fund to support community and business initiatives beginning in 2022/23, with targeted stakeholder consultation in 2021/22 to ensure maximum impact of the new fund.

Manitoba Accessibility Office



2. WELCOME TO THE MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY OFFICE (MAO)

On December 3, 2020, the Manitoba government announced a new name for the former Disabilities Issues Office to reflect the focus of its work: The Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO). This office supporting the Minister responsible for Accessibility and the Accessibility Advisory Council, and is charged with the implementation of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The MAO is part of Manitoba's department of Families.

The MAO Vision and Mission statements are:

Vision

A fully accessible and inclusive Manitoba where all abilities are valued, diversity and independence are celebrated, barriers are removed, and human rights are protected.

Mission

To achieve greater access and inclusion in Manitoba by promoting accessibility law and practices through education, awareness and collaboration with communities, organizations and businesses.



3. ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD DEVELOPMENT

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) is framework legislation that lays out the principles, structures and focus to remove barriers that disable Manitobans. The five accessibility standards are the building blocks of the AMA. They tell organizations and businesses what they must do, and by when.

The Manitoba government has established the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (2015) and Employment (2019). The AMA commits government to significant progress by 2023, with the anticipated establishment of all five standards by the end of 2023, including those focused on Information and Communications, Transportation and the Design of Public Spaces.

MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Accessibility Standards focus on 5 key areas of daily living:



1. Customer Service - establishes requirements for organizations to provide better customer service to people with disabilities; the regulation was passed in 2015

2. Employment - introduces accessibility requirements related to employee recruitment, hiring and retention; the regulation was passed in 2019

3. Information and Communications - addresses barriers to accessing one-way static information, as well as two-way interactive communication, with an emphasis on electronic information

4. Transportation - applies to barriers Manitobans encounter while getting to work or school, shopping, socializing and other aspects of daily life that rely on accessible public transportation

5. Design of Public Spaces - deals with accessibility to the design and construction of the environment that falls outside the jurisdiction of The Manitoba Building Code, such as sidewalks, pathways and parks

FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF THE ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

The AMA calls on the Accessibility Advisory Council to undertake a review of each standard five years after being established, and every five years after that. The council is in the midst of its review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, which government established as a regulation in 2015. The expected outcome is an understanding of whether and how organizations are meeting the objectives of the standard and what further government efforts are necessary to support progress.

In early 2021/22, the Council will survey stakeholders via EngageMB, hold a variety of online focus groups targeting key stakeholders, and consult the public by webinar, adhering to COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, the council will invite organizations and individuals to make submissions in writing or by telephone. The deadline for public feedback is June 2021. The council will submit its review and recommendations to government by September 2021.

Our Commitment to You

The government will share the Five-year Review of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service with the public and will consider all recommendations to strengthen the standard going forward.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE REMAINING THREE STANDARDS

Over the next two years, Manitoba plans to make significant progress in the development of the three remaining standards in information and communications, transportation and the design of public spaces.

In September 2019, the Accessibility Advisory Council submitted recommendations on the creation of an Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications. The department of Families has been leading work to draft the regulation, which is nearing completion. The government anticipates launching the mandated second 60-day period of public consultation by fall 2021.

The department is also leading work to analyze council's recommendations for accessibility standards for transportation and the design of public spaces. Upon completion of this work, the government will post these draft standards for a second period of consultation. Following the 60-day period of public review, the council will assist with the analysis of the public feedback and recommend possible changes to the draft standards, for the minister's consideration before she introduces them to cabinet.

Our Commitment to You

The government will hold a public consultation on its proposed standard affecting information and communications by fall 2021/22, in order to establish it as a regulation by January 2022.

The government will hold two additional public consultations on its proposed standards affecting transportation and the design of public spaces, in anticipation of establishing these standards in 2023.



4. TOOLS AND TRAINING

Key to the implementation of the accessibility standards, and the work of the Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO), is the creation of tools and training to support compliance with the accessibility standards. The MAO continues to develop new tools for existing standards, including the upcoming publication of “Barriers and Solutions in the Workplace.”

In 2021/22, work will focus on new tools and plain language information to explain the next Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications. In 2022/23, the MAO will expand this work by creating introductory tools to accompany the establishment of the remaining two standards for transportation and design of public spaces.

ONLINE LEARNING PORTAL

In response to the 2018 Independent Report on the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the AMA, the Manitoba government is pleased to announce the 2021/22 launch of an online learning portal. This portal will allow organizations to meet their AMA training requirements anytime from anywhere – including northern and remote Manitoba communities.

ONLINE LEARNING PORTAL CONTINUED

The new learning portal can be accessed from AccessibilityMB.ca. Plain language content explains the requirements of the standards, with examples on how to achieve compliance, and tips for best practices. By integrating short video clips, learners hear directly from Manitobans with disabilities and employers who are benefitting from introducing accessibility measures in their workplaces. Periodic knowledge checks summarize the information and generate a certificate of course completion.

The Customer Service Standard Module will launch in June 2021, in English and French, followed by the Accessible Employment Module later in the summer of 2021.

Our Commitment to You

In 2021, the introduction of an online learning portal to support AMA learning and training opportunities, anytime from anywhere.

FROM WORKSHOPS TO WEBINARS

Safety measures to maintain physical distancing and to slow the spread of COVID-19 created a shift from in-person to on-line training for many organizations, including the Manitoba Government. Although the Manitoba government looks forward to the return to in-person workshops with participant discussion, the MAO will continue to use webinars to feature national and international leaders in the area of accessibility and to create access to our training events throughout Manitoba, with no travel necessary. Accessibility features include American Sign Language, captioning and easy access from a desktop computer, smartphone, tablet, or by calling-in. The MAO will increase the promotion of webinars to remote and northern communities, where limited bandwidth may require some communities to phone in to the event and view recordings later, when they will be posted online.

MANITOBA ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK (MAAW) - WEBINAR



AccessibilityMB.ca

Manitoba 

Our province will celebrate Manitoba Access Awareness Week (May 30 to June 5, 2021) to raise awareness about accessibility issues that affect people with disabilities and many others. The MAO will mark the event with a webinar featuring keynote Yazmine Laroche, Deputy Minister, Public Accessibility, Government of Canada, and a panel discussion of

people with disabilities, organized by the MAO the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities.

The Manitoba government will continue to support a number of local disability organizations, so that they can offer disability awareness and accessibility consultation to organizations and businesses. In 2021/22, the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities will provide regular webinar training on the Accessibility Standard for Employment, targeting individuals who are responsible for developing and implementing policies in their workplace.

Once the Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications and the other two standards have been established, the MAO will develop new training content to help affected organizations comply.

Our Commitment to You

Ongoing webinar training opportunities until in-person workshops and presentations resume.



5. COMPLIANCE

There are over 41,275 organizations in Manitoba that have requirements under the AMA and its standards. These include employers in the private, non-profit and public sectors that are located throughout the province.

Businesses include:

- shops
- restaurants
- hotels
- legal services
- healthcare services
- other professional services

Non-profit organizations include:

- charities
- unions
- places of worship
- community organizations
- member associations

COMPLIANCE - CONTINUED

Public sector organizations include:

- the Manitoba government
- Crown corporations
- regional health authorities
- post-secondary institutions
- school divisions
- municipalities
- government agencies

In March 2020, the province released an accessibility compliance framework that describes the different steps in the compliance process. The first priority is to educate toward compliance. To this end, the Manitoba Accessibility Secretariat is collaborating with numerous partners in the public and private sectors to inform organizations about the legislation, share practical tools and resources, and provide accessibility guidance and training.

Going forward, the secretariat will continue to implement the accessibility compliance framework through various activities, such as:

- sending emails and letters to organizations, associations and stakeholders well in advance of upcoming compliance deadlines
- monitoring compliance of accessibility plans among small and large public sector organizations
- conducting reviews and audits of policies, measures and practices, as required under accessibility standards
- issuing plans to organizations so that they achieve compliance
- providing answers and guidance on requirements under the legislation
- working with government-appointed agencies, boards and commissions to ensure the important services they deliver adhere to accessibility legislation



COMPLIANCE - CONTINUED

Our Commitment to You

- Proactive awareness raising and support of compliance measures under the AMA.
 - Implementation of strategic compliance projects, such as dedicated reviews and audits of accessibility plans and policies.
-



6. PUBLIC AWARENESS

FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY DURING COVID-19

Since March 2020, Canadians have worked hard to adapt to everyday life and to learn to live successfully during a pandemic. COVID-19 has brought profound changes to our personal lives. In addition to common challenges that we all face, Manitobans with disabilities have experienced new barriers related to mobility, hearing, vision, understanding and other invisible disabilities. With on-going pandemic restrictions, accessibility standards instruct Manitobans on how to provide safe access to goods and services, and how to make employment processes and workplaces barrier-free.

The requirements under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service direct organizations and businesses to welcome service animals, support persons, and assistive devices, such as walkers, and to communicate in a way that meets their customers' needs without compromising safety. The standard also tells businesses to inform visitors when accessibility features, like power doors, are not available, and to provide alternative solutions. The Manitoba government will continue to provide lists of accessibility considerations under the COVID-19 banner on the [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca) website and to share this information inside and outside government.

FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY DURING COVID-19 - CONTINUED

The Manitoba government will also continue to model accessibility by communicating emergency information related to the pandemic in accessible ways, including American Sign Language, and by integrating accessibility measures in its vaccination rollout.

The AMA standards also serve as a reminder that not everyone who faces a barrier uses a wheelchair or white cane. During the pandemic, people with compromised immune systems are among the Manitobans who are most vulnerable to contracting the virus. The Accessibility Standard for Employment calls on employers to ensure their employees are safe during an emergency. Even as businesses welcome their employees back to the office, the standard reminds employers that safety may dictate that some employees continue to work from home.



Sample social media message encouraging safe and healthy workplaces for employees with disabilities.

One of the lasting impacts of the pandemic will be the lesson learned that we all rely on the community for support: By replacing stigma with attitudes of kindness and shared responsibility, we will weather this storm and pave the accessible way forward: “We are all in this together.”

Our Commitment to You

Continued focus on maintaining accessibility in the government and private sector response to the pandemic.

MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY AWARDS (MBAA)



The 2018 Independent Report on the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the AMA recommended introducing accessibility awards as an incentive for compliance. Acting on this recommendation, research began on effective ways to use awards to

promote accessibility to new audiences and to encourage peer modeling of accessibility.

In 2020, the government launched the Manitoba Accessibility Awards (MBAA) during a webinar to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3rd. In future post-pandemic times, the aim is to include the MBAA in existing awards programs to expand awareness, for instance among members of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce.

The Manitoba government will continue to promote public sector participation in the awards to the private sector, including to business (shops, restaurants, hostels, legal, healthcare, and other professional services), non-profit organizations (charities, unions, and places of worship), and large and small municipalities. The government will recognize the contributions of nominees and award winners in print and social media, on government websites and in the government's newsletter, "Accessibility News".

Our Commitment to You

The second Manitoba Accessibility Awards will take place in collaboration with existing awards programs in 2022/23.

WEBSITE - ACCESSIBILITYMB.CA

In 2014, the government supported the creation of AccessibilityMB.ca as a major outreach and communication tool to promote AMA awareness and education initiatives. Over the years, the website has grown to include important information on:

- the AMA
- the standards
- compliance
- industry-specific information
- resources
- online training
- events

In 2021, the government will update AccessibilityMB.ca to align its structure, with the government's AMA priorities.

Our Commitment to You

All updates to AccessibilityMB.ca will prioritize accessibility, enhance user experience, improve efficiency, and will ensure that all visitors have a solid understand of the AMA and its benefits to all Manitobans.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

The MAO has produced "Accessibility News" since December 2017. It provides updates about consultations, training events, standard development, and new tools and resources, to organizations that must comply with the AMA and to the public. Going forward, the government will continue to grow its current list of 1,488 subscribers (as of April 1, 2021), to facilitate public awareness and education about Manitoba's accessibility standards, resources, and events in Manitoba and across Canada. To enhance public understanding and practice of the AMA, the "Manitoba Accessibility Stories" section will feature organizations and individuals who champion accessibility in their personal and professional work.

Our Commitment to You

In 2020/21 and 2020/22, the government will produce at least 10 issues of "Accessibility News" to serve as a key public awareness and educational resource.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Early in 2021/22, the government will develop a new communications strategy to guide the Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO) public awareness efforts, which will employ traditional and newer methods for delivering information to all Manitobans. While print and electronic communications will target all regions of the province, including remote northern and Indigenous communities, where possible, the MAO will return to building connections through in-person presentations and workshops.

Beginning in 2020, the MAO introduced social media toolkits (text and images) related to provincial accessibility events for the public, available on AccessibilityMB.ca. The messaging often complements national accessibility initiatives, such as National Access Ability Week, and encourages members of the public to engage in raising accessibility awareness via their social media networks. In 2021/22 and 2022/23, the MAO will continue to create and share social media toolkits to encourage its allies and stakeholders to facilitate an online conversations about how to achieve an #AccessibleMB.

The Manitoba government frequently uses its official YouTube channel to make important information available for public viewing and distribution. The "Manitoba Accessibility Office" YouTube playlist includes a comprehensive collection of AMA educational and training videos. As the MAO continues to host webinars, it will make webinar recordings and related resources available on YouTube and AccessibilityMB.ca.

Our Commitment to You

New communications strategy that promotes accessibility in a variety of ways, including accessible online methods.

EVENTS

The Manitoba government holds several accessibility and disability events each year to collaborate with the community and focus public attention on related priorities. As noted above, in relation to Manitoba Access Awareness Week, the MAO plans its training webinars and presentations around these events. New in 2021/22, the Manitoba government will proclaim and participate in Indigenous Disability Awareness Month in November.

In 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Manitoba government will proclaim:

- Manitoba Access Awareness Week (May 30-June 5, 2021)
- Deaf-Blind Awareness Month (May)
- Disability Employment Awareness Month (October)
- Indigenous Disability Awareness Month (November)
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3



Since 2012, the Manitoba government annually proclaims Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) in October to encourage the hiring and inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is celebrated annually on December 3rd. Every year, Manitoba joins people across the world in promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in every aspect of life, including political, social, economic and cultural life.



7. BUILDING COMMUNITY

The Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat are joined in their efforts to implement the AMA, through a vast network of collaborators. This network begins with colleagues in Manitoba Families, central services in the Manitoba government, particularly those related to Communications and the Civil Service, and Departmental Accessibility Coordinators across government. Equally important are the many accessibility champions who join government from the community.

MANITOBA ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY NETWORK (MBAAN)

The Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Network is an ad hoc advisory group to the MAO that shares tools and expertise in creating accessibility within and across Manitoba organizations. Currently, included among the monthly online meetings are representatives from Manitoba's Crown corporations, universities, the United Way and community disability organizations. Members provide advice, feedback, promotion and participation in almost all of MAO's accessibility initiatives, including event planning, the creation of videos featuring Manitobans, and most recently, in launching the Manitoba Accessibility Awards. MAO staff are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of this significant group of colleagues.

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

The starting point for the creation of each accessibility standard is the presentation of Terms of Reference for a standard to the council. Council members are representatives of key stakeholder groups, including the disability community. Although members may arrive with contrary views in some areas, before long the council speaks with one voice on what matters most. The strength of the accessibility standards lies in this value placed on discussion both at council meetings and in consultation with the community.

The Manitoba government owes enormous debt to past council members, as it extends its on-going gratitude to each of the current council members:

- Chairperson John Graham, Director of Government Relations at the Retail Council of Canada
- Vice Chairperson Brad Robertson, Director of Applications for People Corporation
- Kristine Cowley, Assistant Professor in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba
- Scott Jocelyn, President and CEO of the Manitoba Hotel Association
- Laurel Repski, human resource consultant and former Vice President of HR, Sustainability and Audit, University of Winnipeg
- Dianna Scarth, part-time commissioner with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and former director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission
- Josh Watt, Executive Director of the Manitoba School Boards Association
- Kelly Cook, Councillor for the City of Selkirk and representative of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities



CONTACT

If you have any questions, require this information in an alternate format, wish to subscribe to "Accessibility News", or are interested in attending a training workshop, please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office.

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