

Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan 2021 and 2022

[The Accessibility for Manitobans Act \(AMA\)](#), enacted in December 2013, calls on the Manitoba government and all 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 disable people.

As part of the process of updating [The Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan](#) for 2021 and 2022, the government sought feedback from Manitobans on how to continue advancing accessibility across government.

Engagement Overview

The goal of this engagement was to seek input from community disability organizations on what the government should do to advance accessibility under the AMA, and on priority areas of accessibility to be addressed in the 2021 and 2022 accessibility plan.

The Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) sent invitations to 100 community disability organizations on August 30, 2020, inviting responses by September 15, 2020. Eleven responses were received.

What We Heard

Participants provided input on advancing accessibility across government, which is summarized below.

From your organization's perspective, how aware are you of the Manitoba government's efforts to improve accessibility?

All respondents stated they were somewhat aware of the Manitoba government's efforts to improve accessibility. Other options included very much aware, not at all aware and unsure.

From your organization’s perspective, how satisfied are you with the Manitoba government’s efforts to improve accessibility?

Of the eleven responses received, no one indicated they were very satisfied with the government’s efforts to improve accessibility. Four respondents (36 per cent) were somewhat satisfied. Three respondents (27 per cent) stated they were somewhat dissatisfied while four (36 per cent) said they were very dissatisfied.

What are the key areas the Manitoba government should focus on when updating the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan for 2021 and 2022? Select your top three priorities.

The top priority selected by respondents was to improve accessibility of government services in compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. This was followed by ensure all products and services purchased or contracted by the Manitoba government meet accessibility requirements. Increase the inclusion of Manitobans with disabilities in the Civil Service and improve accommodations for employees in compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Employment were tied for third. The least selected priority was to improve accessibility of the Manitoba government’s website.

Response	Per Cent
Improve accessibility of government services in compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.	34%
Ensure all products and services purchased or contracted by the Manitoba government meet accessibility requirements.	24%
Increase the inclusion of Manitobans with disabilities in the Civil Service.	17%
Improve accommodations for employees in compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Employment.	17%
Improve accessibility of the Manitoba government’s website.	7%

From your individual or organization’s perspective, how could the Manitoba government improve accessibility going forward?

Participant responses have been grouped by key themes that emerged.

Improving accessibility

Respondents suggested the province consult with people with disabilities and their families on a continuous basis, as well as seek input from disability rights organizations and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission on government measures to improve accessibility. Accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities, autism and dementia was highlighted among the responses, which included a call for community grants to encourage the development of dementia-friendly initiatives.

Increasing accessibility of communications, information and application forms

Respondents suggested the government prioritize the following actions:

- offering an alternative to paper forms with fillable pdf and word documents
- including American Sign Language in meetings.
- using Zoom or similar platforms to facilitate accessibility.
- providing health information, medication and treatment instructions by email
- having staff available to assist with reading information (including in languages other than English) as needed.
- due to COVID-19, making it possible to attend health-related appointments using a phone or face-to-face web application

Pre-employment processes and onboarding

Respondents indicated the needs of persons with disabilities should be kept in mind to ensure human resource practices and all parts of the employment process are inclusive. The emphasis was on accessible hiring, including job recruitment, screening, hiring, interviewing, training and onboarding.

The survey respondents noted particular challenges related to job seekers on the autism spectrum, who require clarity in the job description (what skills or education are essential), and assessment measures during the interview (i.e., assessing an individual's fit for the position versus personality). Also highlighted were important considerations for employers such as having an inclusive onboarding process, supervision, points of contact, availability of mentoring support, and clear communication around lunch and breaks.

Respondents also identified the need for funding to support diagnostics, treatment and services to facilitate entry of people with disabilities into the workforce.

Do you have other comments you wish to share on how to strengthen accessibility within the Manitoba government?

Several respondents spoke about the need for government to take concrete action, rather than conduct more surveys and consultations that result in similar conclusions.

Respondents offered the following suggestions:

Accessibility awareness and training

Respondents highlighted the need for increased departmental training to facilitate attitude change and knowledge dissemination about the barriers people with disabilities experience that limit full participation in society. Respondents recommended enhanced accessibility training for people in the health, justice, housing and social services fields.

Improved access for individuals to government and community services

Respondents suggested the following:

- providing a government phone number where individuals experiencing barriers can call for assistance in finding solutions
- creating a prominent site map on the government website with accessibility resources and a referral number for questions
- posting clear, accessible signage with images and pictures to facilitate dementia-friendly services and wayfinding
- encouraging community organizations to provide closed captioning in public restaurants, bars and stores
- funding provincial-community partnerships to ensure procurement of accessible goods and services

Next Steps

The results of this engagement with community disability organizations and individuals, as well as dialogue with other stakeholders, will inform the development of the Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan 2021 and 2022. The goal is to improve accessibility across government and to work towards the effective implementation of current and future AMA accessibility standards.

It is anticipated that MGAP 2021 and 2022 will be released in January 2021.

Questions?

Please direct any questions or comments to Charissa McIntosh, Department of Families Accessibility Coordinator at Charissa.McIntosh@gov.mb.ca.