

# Winnipeg Airports Authority’s Accessibility Plan, 2023-2026

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## Executive summary

In 2022, we introduced a new vision for Winnipeg Airports Authority (WAA). Our mission of “connecting communities and partnering to build a sustainable future” guides our organization in everything we do. We recognize that accessibility and inclusion lay at the heart of building a sustainable future and we are prioritizing the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to equal access at YWG. We will be welcoming and inclusive to all.

In early 2023, WAA engaged InterVISTAS Consulting to assist in completing this Accessibility Plan and to solicit feedback from disability advocacy groups, people with disabilities, as well as employees. This Plan reflects the diversity of the communities in which we are located and helps describe some of the important steps WAA will take over the next three years to enhance accessibility in our services and at our facilities.

## General

### Purpose

This plan guides Winnipeg Richardson International Airport’s position on creating a barrier-free environment for passengers, staff, and customers. It outlines objectives related to accessibility, which strive to meet the expectations of the communities in which we operate. WAA reviews this document every three years to ensure that it reflects the needs of all passengers and users of the airport. This plan is predicated on the vision that WAA can improve the passenger experience for all passengers and create a truly inclusive environment.

WAA is committed to meeting the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*, the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations (ATPRRs)*, and *Accessible Canada Regulations (ACRs)*. This plan helps show our community where we are headed and how we will get there.

### Statement of commitment

As the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reminds us, travel is the business of freedom. WAA believes in providing products and services that reinforce autonomy, dignity, and the freedom to travel regardless of perceived differences.

We will be the most accessible airport in Canada. While this is an ambitious goal, WAA continues to work closely with our community to ensure that the airport delivers an exceptional and frictionless experience for passengers. WAA will work with community stakeholders to ensure that products and services eliminate, and not erect, barriers. We will be welcoming and inclusive for all.

As part of our corporate commitment to the region, WAA recognizes the importance of prioritizing accessible and inclusive experiences. While the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and other regulatory bodies establish base requirements, WAA looks well beyond these requirements. Our programming reflects the diversity of the community in which we live and WAA will continue to drive change to remove barriers, setting a precedent for other airports and organizations across Canada.

### Who can I contact to give feedback or ask questions?

WAA encourages feedback both publicly and anonymously from the communities we support. We invite all accessibility-related concerns, complaints, and compliments, as well as all requests for

documentation in alternative formats, including WAA's Accessibility Plan 2023 – 2026 in large print, braille, or video/audio formats.

Feedback and requests can be submitted to WAA's Accessibility Specialist by using the feedback form or through any of our social media accounts. Once received, an acknowledgement of its receipt will be issued in the same format as it was submitted. All comments are kept on file for record keeping, and responses will be issued in a timely manner, provided the feedback is not anonymous.

Contact name: WAA Accessibility Specialist

Phone: 204-227-1527

Feedback form: <https://www.waa.ca/en/passengers/accessibility/feedback/>

Email: [accessibility@waa.ca](mailto:accessibility@waa.ca)

Mailing address: 1970 Wellington Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R3H 1C2

Website: <https://www.waa.ca/en/passengers/>

We also invite feedback and requests for information using social media platforms, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#). We monitor these accounts closely and will respond to comments, complaints, and suggestions. We aim to respond to barrier-related issues as quickly as possible.

### [How do we understand barriers to accessible transportation?](#)

WAA follows the social model of disability. This means that people with disabilities encounter barriers in the environment as opposed to people being disabled by their differences. For that reason, barrier identification is at the core of our efforts to deliver effective customer service.

We categorize barriers into five (5) broad categories:

**1. Attitudinal barriers**

- These result when people think or act based on false assumptions.

**2. Systemic barriers**

- These include policies, procedures, or work instructions that result in some people being excluded from activities, employment, or other services.

**3. Technological barriers.**

- These occur when technology, such as a smartphone application, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities.

**4. Information and communication barriers**

- These are created when information is offered in a format that suits some of the population, but not all people.

**5. Physical/architectural barriers**

- These are physical obstacles that prevent access to a facility, room, or other location.

We will continue to evaluate all aspects of our airport and organization through the lens of barriers.

## Accessibility achievements in the past

We are proud to continue building on a strong tradition of accessible facilities and services. This commitment is reflected in our main Air Terminal Building (ATB), which was designed according to Universal Design principles. Opened in 2011, the terminal features tactile pavement, high-contrast transitions, and visual/audible public address systems—among many other barrier-free features.

Here is a sample of services and recognition that highlight WAA’s commitment to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to equal access:

1. In 2019, we established the “mYWG” Accessibility Committee to solicit feedback from disability advocacy groups and people with lived experience
2. WAA was the first airport in Canada to establish a Passenger Rehearsal Program for people with disabilities in 2020
3. In 2020, WAA received the Manitoba Accessibility Award (2020) for Large Business
4. WAA established and chaired the first Canadian Airports Accessibility Working Group through the Canadian Airports Council (CAC)
5. Sunflower Lanyard Program for passengers with non-apparent/hidden disabilities
6. The introduction of Aira, a mobile application to support individuals with low vision
7. Recognized by Airports Council International (ACI) – World for providing leadership in airport accessibility
8. In 2020, web accessibility specialists audited our website to ensure WAA met *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA.

## Consultations

In 2019, we established an Accessibility Committee that included disability advocacy group and people with lived experience. It aimed to work with our community to identify, remove, and prevent barriers from being introduced into our services and facilities. We continue to recognize that an effective Accessibility Plan requires ongoing consultation with our community.

To support the development of our Accessibility Plan, WAA has invited feedback from and consulted with a variety of groups that represent Canadians with disabilities and lived experience. Each has had an opportunity to review and provided feedback on this plan. These groups include:

- St. Amant
- Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB) Manitoba
- Inclusion Winnipeg
- Manitoba Possible

Additionally, WAA created a Passenger Rehearsal Program for persons with disabilities. The program allows someone with a disability and their caregiver or support person to visit the airport prior to their scheduled departure to rehearse their individual journey. WAA works with the individual on a customized experience to identify any barriers that the individual may encounter during their travel.

We have also conducted on-site reviews of our facilities and services. We invited people with auditory, mobility, and sensory disabilities to provide feedback about customer service, as well as any barriers they encountered at the airport.

Finally, we have used our social media platforms to survey the general public on barriers to accessibility at YWG and what types of improvements the community would like to see us incorporate in the future.

Taken together, the feedback that we have received informed our approach to service delivery and strengthening our commitment to accessible facilities and services. WAA is a firm supporter of the “Nothing Without Us” principle—to ensure that people with lived experience inform how we can best enhance accessibility in everything we do.

## Information and communications technologies (ICT)

As a vital transportation hub connecting Manitoba to the world, information and communications technologies (ICT) are critical to ensuring a stress-free travel experience. WAA provides all flight information and schedules, including delays and cancellations on its website, WAA.ca. Individuals can also use our website to pay for parking and learn more about other services. Our website was audited by specialists to ensure that it meets *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA*.

Information on critical developments that are time sensitive, effects available services, or may impact the health, safety, and security of airport users are posted as an alert on the top of every page of our website and on our social media channels.

In the terminal, we provide visual and audible announcements through our public address (PA) system. We provided flight information and health, safety, and security information in both audio and visual formats.

## Communication, other than ICT

Effective communication requires a good understanding of what types of barriers an individual with a disability may encounter in the airport environment. To improve how we communicate with both passengers and airport staff, WAA has focused on training that addresses attitudinal barriers. This helps staff understand the nature of a person’s disability, the types of barriers, as well as whether a person may use an assistive device to assist in hearing, seeing, or communicating.

WAA is committed to ensuring that information is communicated in a way that best suits the individual. This means offering information in alternative formats, such as accessible electronic formats, large print, audio formats, braille, providing information in clear and concise sentences. Additionally, this means asking a person if they would like information in writing or whether they would like to speak in a quieter location.

## Procurement of goods, services and facilities

WAA recognizes that the most effective way to prevent barriers from being introduced is by responsible procurement practices. In 2022, WAA incorporated commitment to accessible procurement into our Procurement Policy and Procedures. Our goal is to partner with companies and businesses that believe in a barrier-free transportation system and can demonstrate commitment to this philosophy through their product / service offerings and development. In practice, this sets the expectation of embedding accessibility into our business requirements and evaluation criteria when procuring goods, services, and products that are used by passengers, employees, and other users of the airport.

In early 2023, WAA implemented a new procurement platform that, through supplier registration process, invites suppliers to self-declare the percentage of persons with disabilities in their workforce. This is designed to signal to our supplier base that our commitment to promoting accessibility extends beyond the WAA organization and into our supply chain.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

In 2019-2020, we established an Accessibility Committee as a way to consult advocacy groups and people with lived experience. The Committee enables WAA to receive feedback on how it designs services and how it implements them at the airport. By conducting on-site “lived experience” events, we receive feedback about potential barriers and challenges in service delivery. The feedback we have received has led to the implementation of programming, such as the Sunflower Lanyard Program for people with non-apparent disabilities.

Additionally, WAA provides accessibility awareness training to all WAA staff, as well as to contracted service providers who are directly engaged in providing customer service. For example, this includes curbside assistance for passengers with disabilities. Among other topics, the training WAA provides its staff includes barrier identification and strategies to overcome barriers for people with disabilities. Additionally, the content includes all of the services that WAA provides to support people who encounter barriers while using the airport.

All personnel who are required to be trained receive an adequate level of knowledge in respect of the following concepts:

- Human rights framework and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- The role of Canadian Transportation Agency and the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (ATPDR)
- Key terminology and definitions
- Types of mobility aids and devices
- Types of assistive devices
- Language of Dignity
- Identification of the five barriers to equal access
- Providing assistance and interaction with the public
- Physical assistance
- Handling mobility aids and equipment
- Service Dogs and Support Persons
- Recognition of common symbols throughout the terminal
- The role of the YWG Accessibility Committee
- Summary of programs and services available at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport
- Accessibility complaints, compliments, and suggestions process

## Transportation

WAA recognizes its role as a transportation hub, which connects our communities to the rest of the prairies and the world. We work closely with all other transportation services that use the airport. We have collaborated with hotel shuttle buses, taxi companies, and transportation network companies to ensure they offer accessible services or products. For those companies with which WAA has a contract,

we ensure they are trained to support passengers and employees with disabilities. This training is part of our requirements to comply with the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations* (ATPDRs).

We also established and maintain an Accessibility Committee that is comprised of WAA staff, as well as airlines that operate from YWG and representatives of disability advocacy groups. The purpose of the Committee is to identify barriers and discuss ways to work collaboratively to remove them from terminal facilities and services.

## Built environment

The Air Terminal Building was designed according to Universal Design principles, which helps ensure the architectural environment remains barrier-free. However, WAA also ensures that any changes to the architectural environment and any new construction comply with the latest applicable building codes and standards. For example, this includes documents like the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)/Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) B651:23 *Accessible design for the architectural environment*. Additionally, WAA's Accessible Procurement Policy ensures that universal design principles are at the forefront of purchasing new goods, services, and equipment. This is important because it prevents barriers from being introduced into the airport environment, which also eliminates the need to make costly changes to infrastructure in the future.

## Provisions of the CTA accessibility-related regulations

WAA is committed to meeting the requirements of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA), the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations* (ATPRRs), and *Accessible Canada Regulations* (ACRs).

WAA is subject to the Canadian Transportation Agency's *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations* (ATPDRs) and the provisions of these regulations that apply to it. In particular, WAA is subject to "Part 1—Requirements Applicable to Transportation Service Providers" and "Part 4—Requirements Applicable to Terminal Operators."

## Employment

As an employer, we strive to create an environment in which all individuals are welcomed. We currently maintain the following policies to address potential systemic barriers to equal access:

- Accommodation Policy
- Employee Equity Policy
- Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy

To support the development of employer-related policies and plans, we have established a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Steering Committee. This Committee consists of a wide range of employees at WAA from all levels of the organization. The DEIA Steering Committee plays a crucial role in shaping WAA's future and promoting DEIA awareness, barriers, and understanding across the organization and our communities. This includes addressing attitudinal barriers across our organization by supporting training and awareness activities related to barriers and disability. We will continue to use this as the vehicle through which we identify and remove systemic barriers to accessible employment.

Additionally, we will continue to use the DEIA Steering Committee to solicit feedback from our employees to ensure ongoing consultation on barriers to employment.

## Accessibility Action Plan, 2023-2026

WAA remains committed to continuous improvement and to enhancing accessibility for all users of the airport. Over the next three years, we will continue to identify, remove, and prevent barriers based on the following action plan. The Accessibility Action Plan will be reported on and reviewed by our Accessibility Committee to maintain momentum on achieving our goal of a barrier-free WAA.

Each action is accompanied by the anticipated barrier that the action will address, as well as the target completion date.

### Actions

- By the end of 2023, WAA will establish a Sustainable Meetings and Events Procedure. The procedure will include accessibility specifications and requirements to promote an inclusive and accessible environment for all meeting attendees.
- By the end of 2023, WAA will develop an Accessibility Policy. This distinct policy will describe WAA's commitment to barrier identification, removal, and prevention. This policy will guide WAA's actions and will align with strategic priorities, supported by the senior leadership team. This policy will apply to WAA as an employer and a transportation service provider.
- Starting in 2023, WAA will enhance the consultation process. This will be achieved through enhancement of the mYWG Accessibility Committee by expanding membership to include more advocacy groups and consultation initiatives (e.g. lived experience focus groups). In addition, WAA will develop surveys to gather feedback from both employees and airport users on barriers/accessibility at WAA. WAA will also leverage social media and other formats to gather feedback about barriers in the workplace and airport.
- Starting in 2023, WAA will increase employee awareness of accessible procurement practices to demonstrate WAA's commitment to embedding accessibility into business requirements and evaluation criteria.
- In 2024, WAA will conduct a comprehensive assessment of all policies, services, and facilities that WAA offers to passengers. WAA will conduct a review of all internal employer-related policies/plans to address barriers to employment. In addition, WAA will conduct a review of all Information Technology (IT) systems to identify barriers specific to employees across departments. Furthermore, WAA will audit both architectural and sensory environments of WAA facilities.
- By the end of 2024, WAA will introduce new training for all WAA employees, including senior leadership. The training will focus on barrier-identification, strategies to remove barriers, and prevent barriers from being introduced.
- In 2025, WAA will develop a series of tools to support pre-planning the journey in advance of arriving at the airport. This will include the creation of a sensory guide for passengers with



disabilities to support pre-planning.

- By the end of 2025, WAA will increase collaboration with disability advocacy organizations and recruitment agencies to identify and remove barriers to employment at WAA. WAA will review job descriptions and advertisements for employment to ensure they are barrier free and to attract diverse talent. In addition, WAA will develop plain-language job postings and strive for job posting that are 500 words or less.