Consultation process when developing and updating your organization's accessibility plan:

Requirements and Recommendations

Requirements under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Per The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, public sector organizations in Manitoba are required to prepare accessibility plans. These plans must be updated every two years, and **consultation is required every time an update to the strategic document is made**.

Affected public sector organizations include the Manitoba government, municipalities, regional health authorities, Crown corporations, postsecondary institutions, and school divisions.

Section 33(4) of the legislation reads:

- "In preparing an accessibility plan, a public sector body must consult with persons disabled by barriers or representatives from organizations of persons disabled by barriers."

Consultations offer important opportunities to listen, learn, and discuss. People with disabilities are experts on their own needs and provide valuable input into the development of accessible policies, program and practices. To demonstrate compliance with this requirement, the written plan should describe the manner in which your organization engaged in consultations.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act does not mandate a specific way to conduct consultations. Organizations differ in their size, needs, client base, resources, and geographical location, among other factors. This can affect the scope and nature of the consultation process. **Your organization must decide who, when, and how to consult and ensure that consultations are designed to be accessible and inclusive**. It is recommended that your organization consult in a way that best supports your efforts to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for persons with visible and invisible disabilities.

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Consultations Tips

Below are consultation tips to consider as you update your organization's accessibility plan:

- ✓ Above all, when possible, involve people with disabilities in planning your consultations

- ✓ Think of different consultation processes and activities and determine which one(s) best suit your organization's mandate and your client base. Some activities include in-person events, virtual meetings, interviews, focus groups, roundtable discussions, phone calls, feedback forms, surveys or a combination of these or other means.

- ✓ Make your consultation accessible to people with disabilities. Allow different ways of providing feedback – for example over the phone, by email or text. If hosting an in-person or virtual event, ask participants if they require accommodations to participate and provide them upon request. Hold in-person events in locations without physical barriers. Hold virtual events on platforms that have accessibility features and know how to use them.

- ✓ Include information in the accessibility plan on when you consulted; the questions asked; who was consulted, the range of disabilities represented; and how the responses informed the contents of your accessibility plan.

- ✓ Consider consulting with family members and caregivers of people experiencing barriers, as well as service providers and academics with expertise in disability issues.

- ✓ Reach out to employees, clients, and the public for ideas about how to improve accessibility within your organization.

- ✓ Ask for suggestions to improve accessibility of the organization. Request input on identifying accessibility priorities.

- ✓ Consider incorporating consultations into on-going activities and communications, if applicable.

- ✓ Present your draft accessibility plan and invite feedback from individuals or disability organizations before finalizing it and making it publically available.

Remember: Consultation is a two-way process in which public sector organizations seek and receive the views of citizens, clients and communities on policies, programs and services that affect them. Consultations are an integral component of your organization's journey towards removing barriers and ensuring accessible services, goods and supports are available to all.

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