

Guide to Organizing Accessible Events

The Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation

March 2026

This information is available in alternate formats on request.

Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office at 204-945-7613 or email MAO@gov.mb.ca.

Legal Disclaimer

This guide is not legal advice. It aims to assist businesses and organizations to understand how to organize accessible events. This guide does not replace the contents of [the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation](#) or [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#). If there is any conflict between this training resource and the regulation or the act, the latter two shall prevail.

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Accessibility in Manitoba

Manitoba continues to work to create an accessible and inclusive province where people of all abilities can participate in their communities every day. [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) helps make Manitoba more accessible by preventing, reducing and removing barriers for individuals with disabilities.

Plan your event so individuals with disabilities feel welcome. Accessibility is not a courtesy—it is a human right. Nearly every Manitoban has a disability, knows someone with a disability or will have a disability in the coming years.

Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, episodic, visible or non-apparent. Many individuals with visible disabilities also have non-apparent disabilities.

Accessibility Barriers

An accessibility barrier is anything that limits or prevents a person from receiving information, services and goods, accessing a space or participating in an activity.

Types of Barriers:

- **structural barriers** are physical features of buildings, spaces or environments that make access difficult or impossible for some people. Examples: Stairs without ramps or elevators, narrow doorways or hallways, lack of accessible washrooms, poor lighting or uneven surfaces.
- **information and communication barriers** occur when information is shared in a manner that is not accessible or understandable by everyone. Examples: Materials not available in accessible formats, videos without captions or sign language interpretation or websites that are not screen-reader compatible.
- **technological barriers** are created by digital tools, systems or technologies that are not designed with accessibility in mind. Examples: Software or applications that cannot be used with assistive technologies or inaccessible virtual meeting platforms.
- **systemic barriers** are policies, procedures, practices or organizational structures that disadvantage certain people or groups. Examples: Rigid work schedules that do not allow flexibility or accommodations, hiring or service processes that assume everyone has the same abilities or a lack of clear accommodation processes.
- **attitudinal barriers** are beliefs or assumptions about people that limit inclusion and participation. Examples: Assuming a person is not capable because of a disability, not believing in offering accommodations or speaking directly to a support person, instead of directly to an individual.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to support individuals and organizations in making their indoor, outdoor and online events more inclusive and accessible. It offers practical tips for planning, hosting and collecting feedback to ensure an event meets the needs of all participants.

Under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#), the [Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation](#) sets out requirements to ensure individuals with disabilities can access goods and services in a respectful, equitable and barrier-free way. The standard applies to all organizations in Manitoba with at least one employee and focuses on everyday customer service practices. It requires organizations to meet diverse communication needs, welcome assistive devices, service animals and support persons, maintain accessibility features, invite feedback, and train staff on accessible service and accommodations. Together, these requirements help remove barriers and promote inclusive participation for all Manitobans.

To learn more about the responsibilities outlined under this regulated standard and how to meet Manitoba's accessibility requirements, visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](#).

Accessibility Tips for In-Person Events

Always prioritize accessibility during event planning. Assign specific staff or volunteers to oversee the event or to establish a dedicated accessibility working group to guide planning and implementation.

Consider consulting with individuals with disabilities in the planning phase of the event.

The Venue

Creating an inclusive event begins with recognizing and addressing potential barriers that individuals with disabilities might face, and the best time to do that is during the planning phase. Start by evaluating the venue.

Whenever possible, take the time to visit the location in person. Consider the diverse needs of attendees with various disabilities and assess how the space might support or hinder their participation.

Keep in mind that the event venue may need to meet specific accessibility standards under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#).

For details on legal requirements and guidance, visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

Considerations for Event Planning

Accessible Parking Spaces

Many people will use a car or van to get to the event. Picking a venue with accessible parking or creating a sufficient number of accessible parking spaces will make it easier for individuals with disabilities to attend.

When planning event parking, create accessible spaces as close as possible to:

- paths to the nearest accessible venue entries and exits
- lifts and ramps for people using mobility devices

Other considerations may include:

- providing a designated passenger drop-off area that is clearly marked with signs and located close to the event entrance
- using accessible vehicles for event transportation. For example, provide a shuttle service from a remote parking lot to the event area or event entrance

Passenger Drop-Off and Loading Zones

Not all attendees will drive to the event. Many people may arrive by accessible transit services, such as Transit Plus in Winnipeg, taxi, ride-share or family and friends. To ensure safe and convenient access:

- designate a passenger drop-off area close to the main accessible entrance
- ensure the area is level, well-lit and free of obstacles for people using mobility devices

- provide clear signage indicating the drop-off zone and accessible entrance
- allow enough space for accessible vehicles with ramps or lifts to deploy safely
- include weather protection, such as a canopy, for comfort during loading and unloading, if possible
- ensure the route from the drop-off zone to the entrance is short, barrier-free and clearly marked
- coordinate with local accessible transit providers to confirm the location and any special instructions

Public Transit

Some participants may be using public transit to get to the event. Consider providing accessible public transit information for participants in the registration information package for the event. This information could include:

- schedules of accessible buses
- information on whether the buses on the route are accessible
- whether shelter is provided at the bus stop
- location of passenger drop-off areas

Accessibility Information Areas

A dedicated information booth that offers accessibility information should be placed near the event entrance. In addition, relevant information about accessibility features should be placed on signs or available in pamphlets throughout the venue. Accessibility can be improved by providing:

- information booth areas with level pathways
- booths at a height that someone using a wheelchair could access
- brochures in large print and high-contrast formats for individuals with low vision

Signage

Signs should be in a large, easy to read font with good colour contrast. Use common words and simple, short sentences to make signs easier for everyone to understand.

Clear signs that can be read in all light conditions at drop-off zones and parking areas will help direct people to specific areas across the event site. Signs should indicate the accessibility features located along the path of travel and event areas. Signs at different heights can also help assist people moving through crowds and help them see when they are at specific locations.

Paths of Travel

When organizing the event, take time to map out how attendees will move through the space. Ensure that all key areas, such as entrances, attractions and services, are connected by accessible routes suitable for individuals using mobility aids.

Keep pathways clear by relocating obstacles such as garbage bins or signage boards, and aim for a minimum width of one metre to allow easy passage. If automatic doors

are not available, consider propping them open or arranging for volunteers to assist with entry and exit.

For outdoor venues with uneven terrain like grass or sand, temporary flooring solutions can help create stable, accessible walkways for all participants.

Tip: Electrical wires are a tripping hazard for everyone. Keep electrical wires out of paths of travel or use cable protectors that are wheelchair accessible and are in bright and contrasting colours to alert individuals with low vision.

Seating

Plan the event so that individuals with disabilities can sit more comfortably and participate in the event.

During event planning consider:

- creating or reserving areas with enough room for mobility devices. These areas will need to have a view of the stage from a seated position
- installing a ramp to provide stage access for people who use mobility devices. Keep in mind that there are other requirements for stages listed in the [Manitoba Building Code](#)
- providing seating at tables without chairs that can be access by individuals who use a wheelchair or other mobility device. Where taller, bar height tables are used, provide some lower dining height tables as an option
- offering a variety of chairs with and without armrests, if available
- providing reserve seating for individuals with various disabilities and consider the nature of their disability when doing so. For example, people who rely on lip reading will need to sit closer to the stage and presenters
- offering seating for those who cannot stand for long periods at events where people will be mostly standing
- positioning some seats to allow service animals to accompany their owner and rest in front of or under the seat
- providing outlets and charging stations for people with power wheelchairs, scooters and other electronic mobility devices and medical equipment

Lighting and Acoustics

Whether the event is indoor or outside, proper lighting plays a key role in accessibility. It can help individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing to lip-read or use sign language more effectively.

For daytime events, consider how natural light enters a space. Too much direct sunlight can create a glare or shadows, which may make it harder for individuals with low vision to navigate or see clearly.

Be mindful of acoustics. Spaces with high ceilings or echo-prone environments can make it difficult for those with hearing loss to follow conversations or presentations. If

using a sound system, test it in advance and adjust the volume and speaker placement to reduce echo and improve clarity.

Food Services and Public Eating Areas

Event participants should be able to easily reach food services using an accessible path. Food service booths should offer lower service counters that can be accessed by individuals using a variety of mobility devices. Consider having large print copies of menus for people who have low vision.

When planning tables for the event, it is a good idea to ensure at least 20 per cent of tables are accessible for someone with a mobility aid, or to provide at least one accessible table in each eating area. Providing a mixture of different types of accessible tables can accommodate guests of all abilities.

Ensuring flat, firm and stable space around tables, under it and on the path to reach it will help guests who use mobility devices navigate the eating areas at the event.

Tip: If it is a buffet-style event, be sure to place food, drinks and utensils in easy reach of a person using a wheelchair.

Station volunteers around the area to help assist guests.

Washrooms and Temporary Toilets

It is good practice to plan for accessible washrooms. Accessible toilets can make or break the enjoyment of the event for a person with a disability.

Accessible washrooms and temporary toilets at outdoor events should be at ground level and away from crowds and sound systems, but not so far that they are inconvenient to reach.

There are other requirements for washrooms outlined in the [Manitoba Building Code](#).

Rest Areas, Quiet Spaces and Shelters

If the event attracts large crowds and is longer than a couple of hours, it is helpful to have a designated quiet space for individuals with disabilities. This can include people with mental health issues, sensory issues, fatigue issues or nursing mothers.

Prolonged exposure to rain, wind and sun can sometimes be an unpleasant experience, but some individuals with disabilities are at particular risk from the elements. Open or closed-sided tents can provide weather protection. If your participants at an outdoor event run the risk of being overheated, consider renting cool mist canopies or fans to cool people and service animals in extreme temperatures.

Support Persons

Support persons may be helping some individuals with disabilities at the event. A support person must be allowed to go wherever the person they support goes.

A support person can help with, mobility, personal care, medical needs and more.

Post the admission price for support persons wherever you have information about entry or registration fees, such as on your website or at entrance gates. Consider reducing or waiving the entry fee for support persons.

Service Animals

Service animals help individuals with disabilities. In Manitoba, a service animal under the [Human Rights Code](#) is an animal trained to help a person with a disability. Service animals commonly wear vests or harnesses, however they are not required. Guide dogs are one type of service animal, but other animals can also be trained to assist individuals with disabilities.

At the event, a person with a disability and their service animal should be allowed to go to all public areas. No one should touch, feed or interfere with the service animal.

It is fine to ask if an animal is trained to assist with a person's disability related need, but never ask about the disability or medical condition.

When planning outdoor events, consider designating a suitable area as a relief area for service animals. Make sure to let volunteers know how to direct people to this area and post signs.

Tip: Provide water for service animals. Owners are responsible for caring for their service animals, but by making it easier to care for them, you'll create a more welcoming environment.

You can find more information about service animals at [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

Emergency and Safety Information

Provide event attendees access to the emergency and safety information for the event, like maps, evacuation plans, brochures or signs. Before the event, check whether there is anything that would make these items hard to read, see, hear or understand.

Running the Event

Communication Supports

If a person with a disability asks for accessible information or requires communication supports, work with them to figure out how to meet their needs. For example, someone who is Deaf or hard-of-hearing may need an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter.

Invitations and Event Promotions

Once familiar with the accessibility features available at the venue, be sure to share that information with event attendees. This helps guests with disabilities make informed decisions about their participation and ensures they know what supports are in place.

Use a variety of ways to communicate, such as telephone, email and print, to ensure that guests with disabilities receive the information they need and can provide information back in a way that works best for them.

When promoting the event, think about including accessibility information on all promotions whether on websites, local news features, through social media or on posters, flyers or print ads.

Tip: Make accessibility information on websites easy to find and ensure volunteers and organizers are prepared to answer accessibility-related questions.

Information and Maps

When promoting an event, share clear information about accessibility features so attendees know what to expect. This may include details about accessible washrooms, seating or viewing areas, sign language interpretation and accessible parking. Use simple language and share the information in more than one format or place, when possible, such as online or in print.

Presentations, Speeches and Performances

There are many ways to make sure presentations, speeches, music, performances or exhibits at the event are accessible. When planning your event, consider:

- booking a service to provide captions for live events or providing volunteers to describe performances to persons with low or no vision
- having presenters describe themselves as part of the introductions at the start of a presentation and describe any digital images they share
- booking an interpreter who is qualified in American Sign Language (ASL)

Before and during the event remind speakers, performers, hosts and other presenters to:

- speak clearly
- stay within the allotted time
- make sure there is a clear view of their face and mouth
- use the microphone at all times
- describe any images that may be projected during presentations
- use language that is considerate of individuals with disabilities

Addressing Individuals with Disabilities

Use appropriate language when addressing individuals with disabilities. Always use language that puts the person first, such as:

- referring to “individuals with disabilities”, instead of “disabled people” or “the disabled”
- using the right words, such as disability versus handicap
- referencing specific disabilities, when appropriate, such as a person with epilepsy or a person who uses a wheelchair
- avoiding sympathetic statements, such as victim of, suffers with or stricken with a particular illness or disability

- avoiding assumptions about what a person with a disability can or cannot do but simply asking, “How may I help you?”

Training Staff and Volunteers on Accessibility

All organizations with at least one employee or more are required to provide training to staff and volunteers on Manitoba’s accessibility legislation. This training can be integrated into existing onboarding or professional development programs. For details on what is required, visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

If the event is run entirely by volunteers, offering basic accessibility training is a valuable step toward creating a more inclusive experience. Consider preparing volunteers to:

- communicate effectively with people who have various disabilities
- understand the accessibility features available at the event
- follow emergency procedures that accommodate individuals with disabilities

Gathering Feedback

Gathering feedback about the event’s accessibility is a valuable step, especially for larger gatherings or festivals.

- **Before the event:** During any pre-event consultations, ask participants what accessibility supports they would require or find helpful.
- **During the event:** Encourage attendees to share their experiences. Offer multiple ways for people to provide input and clearly communicate how their feedback will be used. If feedback forms are used, consider adding a question like “Did the event meet your accessibility needs? If not, how could we improve?”
- **After the event:** Consider the feedback received. Use any feedback received to help with the planning of future events.

Accessibility Tips for Webinars and Online Events

This section shares practical tips to help make webinars and online events more accessible for participants with different access needs.

Before the Online Event as part of the event invitation or registration form:

- identify the accessibility features that will be offered. Examples: closed captioning, American Sign Language (ASL) and description of images and speaker
- ask attendees to identify any other accessibility accommodations they may need to participate

Ensure all materials used within the session are accessible and use an accessibility checker to fix any issues.

If using a PowerPoint, remove unnecessary text and borders and make headings 40 point or larger and body text 28 point or larger. Label each slide title clearly and indicate its replacement (part 1, part 2, etc.), if there are multiple slides for the same topic. Always use sans serif fonts (e.g. Arial, Calibri or Verdana).

Some PDFs may not be accessible to screen readers. Always provide an accessible Word document version alongside any PDFs provided.

When possible, share content of presenters in a plain language, accessible format for participants to read in advance.

Send the agenda, minutes and documents at least 3-5 days in advance. Be prepared to provide any documents in multiple accessible formats.

Be prepared to arrange additional accessibility accommodations or alternative formats, including, but not limited to:

- Braille, large print, screen reader-friendly files, plain language materials
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captions

Before the online event:

- Ask for questions and answers from participants in advance.
- Do a test run to make sure all technology works.

During the online event:

- Review accessibility features of the virtual platform for participants at the start of the webinar. Include a summary of how to get the host or presenter's attention, how to participate and how to find the raised hand icon.
 - **Zoom:** How to turn on live captions, pin an interpreter, use keyboard shortcuts or access the chat.
- Always use a headset with microphone to reduce background noise, improve captioning and transcripts and allow audio capabilities.

- Ask participants to identify themselves before speaking.
- Mute all participants to reduce background noise that may make captioning and American Sign Language interpretation difficult.
- Inform participants that American Sign Language interpretation is live and not pre-recorded. This should be announced at the beginning of the webinar.
- Do not blur the sign language interpreter's background as this might obscure the interpretation view.
- Verbalize what is on the screen, including descriptions of images, graphs or charts.
- Ask that presenters speak clearly.
- Inform participants if the webinar is being recorded or transcribed and how to access the recording post-event.

During any presentation use inclusive communication

- Use plain language and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Avoid sarcasm or abstract language.
- Verbally describe visuals and gestures.
- Avoid overlapping speakers.
- Break information into small, manageable chunks.
- Use visual aids and repeat key points.
- Allow extra time for questions or responses.
- Offer breaks in longer meetings.
- Offer camera-off or low-stimulation options, if needed.
- Ensure clear sightlines for interpreters.

Integrate Inclusion into all parts of the meeting

Build inclusion into how the meeting is planned and delivered, rather than treating it as a separate agenda item. Inclusion is multi-dimensional and includes many identities and access needs. For example, when opening a meeting with a land acknowledgement, consider and recognize the diversity of participants, including individuals with disabilities.

Sample Land Acknowledgment:

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration as we work to make Manitoba more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Disability has a profound and unequal impact on Indigenous communities in Canada. Historical and ongoing systemic barriers, including colonialism, socioeconomic disparities and limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services, contribute to higher rates of disability and greater challenges in accessing care and resources.

Hosting Hybrid meetings

Ensure equal access to audio, visuals and materials for both in-person and virtual participants. Use microphones for in-room speakers and ensure online participants can hear. Assign a moderator to monitor the chat and facilitate participation from remote attendees. Use large screens to display virtual participants visibly to the room.

After the Meeting

- Distribute minutes in accessible formats within a reasonable timeframe.

Post-event follow-up email including:

- key decisions
- action items with deadlines
- contact info for follow-up
- A short accessibility feedback request survey (“Was this meeting accessible for you? What could we improve?”)

Invite event attendees to participate in a feedback survey

- Ask: Was this meeting accessible for you? What could we improve?
- offer anonymous feedback options, if possible
- follow up with reminders or clarifications if needed

Accessible Event Planning Checklist

This checklist is designed to help event organizers plan and deliver events that are more accessible and inclusive for participants with different access needs.

Review each section and check off items that apply to the event. Assign responsibilities to staff or volunteers for key accessibility actions. Document any decisions, limitations or alternative arrangements. Use participant feedback to update and improve future planning.

Important Note: This checklist reflects best practices for accessible events and meetings. The checklist is meant to support inclusive planning. Always refer to the [Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation](#) for the complete list of requirements.

Venue

- Accessible parking spaces** – Place accessible parking spaces close to venue entries and exits, pay stations and lifts or ramps.
- Passenger drop-off and loading zones** – Designate a clearly marked passenger drop-off area close to the venue entrance that is level, well-lit and allows enough space for ramps or lifts.
- Food services and public eating areas** – Provide enough space so that someone who uses a mobility support can easily navigate around food services and eating areas.
- Paths of travel** – Provide wide, even, slip-resistant paths, without steps or barriers, that lead to all the public areas of the event.
- Public transportation** – Post local accessible routes and schedules.
- Rest areas and weather shelters** – Offer quiet areas and weather shelters.
- Signs** – Provide high-contrast signs in high and low positions. Make sure signs use fonts that are easy to read in all light conditions.
- Stages and seating** – Provide a ramp for the stage and ensure the stage is visible for someone watching from the accessible seating.
- Support persons** – Allow support persons to accompany individuals with disabilities. Post any admission fees for support persons in the same place you post general admission information.
- Train staff and volunteers** – Train staff and volunteers to welcome individuals with disabilities and explain your event's accessibility features.
- Washrooms and temporary toilets** – Provide accessible toilets or washrooms at ground level, away from crowds and sound systems.

Communications and Promotions

- Communication supports** – Consider offering captioners, sign language interpreters or individuals who can describe performances.

- **Maps and information** – Provide information about the event’s accessibility features. Include a map that shows the location of accessibility information, entrances, seating, washrooms and other key features.
- **Other accessibility considerations** – Provide dedicated accessibility volunteers, rent or buy accessible equipment.
- **Promote accessibility features** – Let attendees know about accessibility features available prior to the event.
- **Ask for feedback** – Collect feedback before, during and after the event.

Accessible Webinars and Online Meetings Checklist

This checklist is a practical tool to help plan and run webinars and online meetings that are more accessible for participants with different access needs.

Review each section and check off items that apply to the virtual event. Assign responsibilities to staff or volunteers for key accessibility actions. Document any decisions, limitations or alternative arrangements. Use participant feedback to update and improve future planning.

Important Note: This checklist reflects best practices for planning accessible webinars and online meetings. The checklist is meant to support inclusive planning. Always refer to the [Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation](#) for the complete list of requirements.

Before the Webinar or Online Meeting

- Accessibility statement** – Include an accessibility statement in the invitation that explains how to request accommodations and who to contact with questions.
- Accommodation requests** – Ask participants in advance if they require accessibility accommodations to fully participate in the meeting.
- Agenda and materials** – Share agenda and meeting materials three to five days in advance to give participants time to prepare or request alternate formats.
- Accessible formats** – Provide materials in accessible formats, when requested.
- Interpreters and captioning** – Book American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning services, if needed.
- Accessible platform** – Choose an online platform or venue that includes accessibility features such as live captions, keyboard navigation and the ability to pin interpreters.
- Technology testing** – Test accessibility features in advance, including closed-captions, screen sharing and interpreter pinning.
- Early-set up** – Meet with presenters, interpreters and captioners 20 to 30 minutes early to test technology including audio, video and accessibility features.

During the Meeting

- Test audio** – Use a microphone or headset and ask speakers to identify themselves before speaking to support captioning and interpretation.
- Accessibility orientation** – At the start of the meeting, explain the accessibility features available, such as closed-captioning, transcription, chat and how to raise hands.
- Verbal descriptions** – Verbally describe any visuals, gestures, charts or images.
- Plain language** – Speak slowly and clearly. Always avoid jargon and acronyms or technical language whenever possible.

- **Visual focus** – Spotlight speakers and avoid background or visual distractions that may interfere with interpretation.
- **Pacing and breaks** – Allow extra time for responses and pauses between speakers, and scheduled breaks to reduce fatigue.
- **Inclusive participation** – Use chat sparingly and read any questions or comments aloud to ensure everyone can follow the discussion.

After the Meeting

- **Accessible follow-up materials** – Distribute minutes, recordings and materials in accessible formats as soon as possible.
- **Decisions and actions** – Clearly outline key decisions, action items and deadlines, so participants can easily review outcomes.
- **Contact information** – Provide contact information for follow-up questions, accommodation requests or clarification.
- **Accessibility feedback** – Ask participants whether the meeting was accessible and what could be improved. Offer anonymous feedback options, when possible.
- **Timely response** – Respond promptly to follow-up questions, feedback or accessibility requests after the meeting.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office:

Manitoba Accessibility Office

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If you have any questions about compliance, please contact the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat:

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