

2024 Progress report

General

Position designated to receive feedback: Accessibility Specialist and Operations Support.

Feedback and alternate format requests may be received in a variety of different ways, such as:

- Phone: 204-227-1527
- Online feedback form: [Feedback Process - Winnipeg Airports Authority \(waa.ca\)](#)
- Email: accessibility@waa.ca
- Mail: 1970 Wellington Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3H 1C2
- Social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn

Executive Summary

In 2023, Winnipeg Airports Authority (WAA) launched an Accessibility Plan, aligning with Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) regulations and reinforcing our commitment to our mission: *"Connecting communities and partnering to build a sustainable future."* Since then, WAA has developed an internal policy outlining clear objectives, strategies, and initiatives to enhance accessibility and foster inclusion across all services and facilities at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport (YWG).

To ensure continued progress toward our accessibility goals, WAA created a dedicated position: **Accessibility Specialist & Operations Support**. This role is instrumental in identifying and removing barriers within both the terminal and the organization itself. Responsibilities include training service providers, strengthening community partnerships, and staying informed on emerging accessibility trends through ongoing professional development.

WAA's efforts were recognized by the Airports Council International (ACI) with Level 3 Accessibility Accreditation, a distinction that remains valid until 2027. This acknowledgment underscores our dedication to excellence in accessibility, and we remain committed to advancing a barrier-free experience for all travelers.

YWG continues to make significant strides in removing barriers within the terminal while maintaining strong community connections. This **2024 Progress Report** highlights our ongoing commitment to accessibility, detailing new initiatives implemented over the past year. The report adheres to all regulatory requirements outlined in **Sections 60(1) and 62(5)** of the CTA framework.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

We continue to keep passengers informed about flight schedules, delays, and cancellations on our website: [YWG Passenger Information](#). Our website follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA. We continue to post important updates on social media and at the top of our website so travelers can get information quickly.

We are in the early stages of working on a digital accessibility roadmap to improve how we share information using varied technologies and communications methods to encompass a wide range of airport operations. We are projecting a completion of the project early 2026. We are currently in Phase 1, which includes reviewing our current systems, website and social media platforms, creating a strategic plan for improvements, and identifying staff training requirements.

To support passengers with hearing loss, we have installed 37 Hearing Loops in the departures area. Installation of an additional 22 Hearing Loops at each gate is underway and expected to be completed by the end of May. For those without hearing aids, we offer Hearing Loop Listeners free of charge at the Information Booth. These devices help ensure clear communication and remove barriers for both passengers and stakeholders.

In collaboration with our IT department, we began reviewing our current public announcement (PA) systems. While we continue to meet accessible communication standards, we have identified several opportunities for enhancement. This year, we engaged with a variety of vendors to prototype early-stage upgrades and are developing a strategy to further improve the passenger experience. Areas under consideration include the addition of visual formats, real-time text-to-speech captioning, potential ASL integration, and improved visual boarding cues. This work remains in progress as we assess feasibility and ensure alignment with regulatory requirements.

Communication, Other than ICT

As a part of our ongoing commitment to making information accessible to everyone, we provide content in multiple formats, including electronic files, large print, audio, and braille. We also use clear, simple language to ensure messages are easy to understand.

At public events, including our Annual Public Meeting, we offer ASL interpretation in partnership with ECCOE, our local ASL service provider. This helps us ensure consistent and standardized access to sign language interpretation.

On social media, we include alt text for all images and use plain language in captions to make content more accessible to all users.

Our Communications team recently completed a two-day digital accessibility training session with Squarely Accessible and is now exploring new ways to share key information — such as using QR codes — to provide quick access to important updates and resources.

Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

We continue to follow sustainable procurement practices to ensure all purchases, such as carpets, furniture, and electronic devices, meet accessibility and sustainability standards. Our Sustainable Procurement Guidance Manual provides clear recommendations for making inclusive choices.

When onboarding new vendors, we use the Bonfire procurement platform, which asks suppliers to self-declare accessibility details, such as the number of employees with disabilities in their workforce. This year, we strengthened our commitment by adding an accessibility section to our Supplier Code of Conduct.

In our facilities, we have made important upgrades to improve accessibility. We installed brighter lighting in key areas, such as the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) checkpoint, making it easier for passengers to see their surroundings and communicate. In the same area, we created a designated wheelchair assistance area to support airlines and the increased demands of our passengers.

Through out our terminal, we created barrier-free seating areas to ensure comfortable and accessible spaces for all travelers. Evaluating our seating plans in both departures and airside, we made several adjustments, creating additional space for disability support such as wheelchairs, walkers and service dogs.

We modified our existing parking kiosk with contrast instructions, tactile markers for key buttons and additional instructions on how to receive personal assistance if required.

In 2024, we introduced two Staxi common-use wheelchairs to help our customer service providers assist passengers at the curb. Features like lifting armrests, a fail-safe brake, and a foldable footrest make it easier and safer to support passengers during pick-up and drop-off.

We are developing an accessibility service podium to supplement the accessible needs on the departures level. The podium is serviced by our customer service providers — this is an extension of the services provided at our information booth which includes Sunflower Lanyards and Sensory Kits. The podium will be launched by the end of June 2025.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

We continue to offer on-site “lived experience” tours with our mYWG accessible committee members. These tours help us understand the challenges passengers face so we can improve accessibility. We also continued to deliver our Passenger Rehearsal Tours, giving travelers a chance to experience their journey before their flight. In 2024, we delivered 12 rehearsal tours, which included elderly passengers, children with autism, and those traveling with service dogs.

Our autonomous Whill wheelchairs were enhanced with updates, including concessions and washroom stops, along with a change in location and increase in hours to better serve our public. We also renewed our services with our support apps Aira and Magnus Mode.

After a successful launch in 2023, we expanded our Sunflower Lanyard program by adding the YWG logo to the lanyard itself. In 2024, we provided more than 200 lanyards to passengers. We also continue to offer Sensory Kits and distributed more than 90 kits. This year, we are evaluating and improving these programs based on passenger feedback.

The mYWG committee is growing; this year, we added several new members, including: one member from Level It Up, a local organization that supports autism individuals in the workplace; a Digital Accessibility expert; and an independent advisor with a neurodiverse disability. We also continue to invite WAA staff, airline representatives, and smaller airlines like Calm Air to join discussions and help make YWG more accessible.

Our Accessibility Specialist continues to grow their expertise by participating in a variety of webinars, training and conferences, including the Rick Hansen Foundation Conference, the Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion, and ongoing online training through Julie Sawchuk’s PASS program. As well, our Specialist has been requested to speak at such organizations like St-Amant and the Regional and Provincial Autism Network meeting.

The Specialist also developed a WAA Accessibility Guide to support internal teams that is currently under review and could potentially launch later this year. The guide includes best practices for event planning and a helpful inclusive language reference.

To support external engagement, we also created a one-page information sheet for the public, including our mYWG stakeholders and members of the Indigenous community. This document has been launched and well received by the communities.

Training remains a top priority. We continue to offer our online training and this year, we added a hands-on element that focuses on Best Practices for assisting passengers with disabilities. So far, our customer service provider ASP and valet staff (Impark) have been fully trained. Topics covered include:

- Human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);

- The role of the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and Accessible Transportation Regulations (ATPDR);
- Key accessibility terms and definitions;
- Types of mobility aids and assistive devices;
- The importance of using respectful and inclusive language;
- The five barriers to equal access;
- How to assist passengers and interact with the public;
- Providing physical assistance when needed;
- Proper handling of mobility aids and equipment;
- Guidelines for service dogs and support persons;
- Recognizing common accessibility symbols throughout the terminal;
- The role of the YWG Accessibility Committee;
- Overview of accessibility programs and services at YWG; and
- How to handle accessibility-related complaints, compliments, and suggestions.

New this year, we have introduced a monthly accessibility audit that includes testing the accuracy of all our accessible features and posing real-time questions to customer service providers. This helps us identify areas that need improvement and provide targeted coaching to staff.

At this year's tabletop emergency exercise, we included a passenger with a disability to ensure our emergency response plans are inclusive. The exercise included a passenger using a wheelchair (unable to evacuate) and tested how the crew would handle this situation. In 2025, we will conduct a Live Emergency Exercise, ensuring accessibility is a key part of our response strategy.

As well, our Goldwing volunteer program welcomed a diverse group of new volunteers, many of whom have lived experience with disabilities. Their contributions will help strengthen our accessibility efforts and create a more inclusive environment at YWG.

Transportation

We continue to work closely with our transportation providers to improve accessibility. To support this, we provide accessibility training to all Shuttles to ensure they meet all regulations and can better assist passengers with disabilities. Additionally, we have updated our curbside license requirements to reflect the need for accessibility training for shuttle drivers.

In response to feedback from the mYWG Accessibility Committee, we are piloting accessible taxis directly at our Arrivals curb — a significant step toward improving the passenger experience for individuals using wheelchairs and service animals. In partnership with our taxi provider, an accessible van will be stationed in a dedicated spot near Arrivals Door 3, helping reduce wait times and improve access to transportation upon arrival. This initiative reflects our continued commitment to responding to community input and creating a more inclusive airport experience.

Built Environment

We continue to design all terminal upgrades using Universal Design principles, ensuring accessibility for everyone. Our tenants follow the same standards when designing their spaces. This year, we welcomed two new tenants, Jenna Rae Cakes and Stella's, to the terminal.

A major focus for 2024 is improving accessibility at our main entrances. We replaced two carousel doors one on departures and the other in our arrival hall with automatic sliding doors to make entry and exit easier for all passengers. Construction will be complete this summer.

Outside the terminal, we repaired the departures and arrivals curb, replacing 180 bricks to improve surface safety and accessibility. We also began exploring solutions to improve the expansion joints on the Departures Bridge for a smoother experience.

We developed a new South Parking Lot to meet City of Winnipeg accessibility standards, featuring tactile warning strips, curb ramps, and clearly marked pathways to support travelers with mobility or vision needs. In addition, we began replacing parking signage in our parkade, including those for accessible stalls, and repainting lines to improve visibility and wayfinding.

Provisions of CTA Accessibility-Related Regulations

We remain committed to the requirements of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA), the Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations (ATPRRs), and the Accessible Canada Regulations (ACRs). The WAA is subject to the Canadian Transportation Agency's Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (ATPDRs) and the provisions of these regulations. We remain compliant and to maintain that compliance, we have moved our training tracking to our Learning Management System (LMS), we have made improvements to

our feedback process and remain on target for all actions captured in our 2023-2025 Accessibility plan.

Employment

We continue to offer accessibility tours of the terminal to help new employees better understand the airport's inclusive design, services and programs. This year, tours included staff from the Facilities, Operations, Human Resources and Communications teams.

To increase awareness of accessibility programs, we hosted an accessibility information session for staff and had more than 25 participants. Additionally, more than 90 employees completed audiometric testing as a preventative health measure to support workplace wellness.

On Dec. 3, in celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we hosted a two-hour ASL workshop, attended by more than 20 employees across the organization. We also participated as a vendor at the first-ever Manitoba Deaf Expo, where we engaged with the Deaf community to help inform our recruitment practices and present the new accessibility initiatives.

As part of our commitment to community inclusion, we sponsored the Inclusion Winnipeg Gala, aligning our goals with other organizations dedicated to accessibility and equity.

Lastly, we teamed up with the Manitoba Down Syndrome Society to launch a Rock Your Socks campaign. We had a guest speaker present on her lived experiences, followed by a terminal tour where she shared feedback from her previous travels. Internally, we celebrated by rocking our socks and posting pictures on our intranet.

Feedback Information

In 2024, WAA received a wide range of passenger feedback through a variety of channels, including emails, in-person conversations and online surveys. The feedback reflecting both positive experiences and opportunities for improvement. Many travelers praised the accessibility programs, including the Sunflower Lanyard, Passenger Rehearsals, and sensory support kits, noting they helped reduce anxiety and improve travel for children with autism, elderly passengers, and travelers with invisible disabilities. Customer service staff and security teams were often recognized for being compassionate, helpful, and respectful — particularly during one-on-one interactions or when responding to specific needs, such as mobility assistance or ASL interpretation.

However, the feedback also highlighted several areas where improvements are needed. Passengers reported negative experiences during security screenings, including aggressive pat-downs, insensitivity toward medical devices, and unclear communication with autistic passengers. Travellers also raised concerns about wheelchair assistance, particularly related to staff refusing to help or lacking clarity on roles between airport and airline services. Other

recurring issues included insufficient accessible parking, missing Sunflower Lanyards, unclear wayfinding for passengers who are blind, and the lack of a quiet zone for neurodivergent individuals. Some travelers also expressed frustration with pre-booked parking failures, inaccessible seating areas, and PA announcements being hard to hear.

These comments have helped guide our improvements and training, and we addressed many issues directly through follow-up communication, staff education, and changes in processes. This feedback loop remains a vital part of how WAA strengthens its commitment to accessibility and inclusive travel experiences.

Additionally, we added accessibility questions to our WIFI survey and have an ongoing accessibility rating. In 2024, we maintained an 8.64 satisfaction rate for accessibility in the terminal. The results of these questions informed us on what features and programs our passengers are familiar with, the type of features they would like to see us develop in the future, and how best to communicate our updates.

Consultations

In 2024, we continued our ongoing engagement with community partners through monthly virtual meetings (with a summer break in July and August). These sessions provided a space for updates, collaboration, and sharing ideas to improve accessibility at YWG.

A highlight of the year was our YWG Accessibility Summit: a full day of planning and presentations featuring updates from departments including Infrastructure, Marketing, Operations and Human Resources. Committee members shared that the summit was a valuable opportunity to reconnect, gain insight into the airport's accessibility efforts, and see the meaningful work being carried out across multiple teams.

mYWG Accessibility committee members:

- CNIB
- Inclusion Winnipeg
- Senior Association of Manitoba
- St-Amant
- Manitoba Possible (co-chair)
- Hard of Hearing Association
- Manitoba Deaf Association
- Level It Up
- Several independent consultants including a person with a guide dog and a digital accessibility expert.

Accessibility Action Plan, 2023-2026

- 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.

Update: Due to change in personnel, this project has return to its draft state with the intention of widening the scope and incorporating more elements to accessible meetings.

- 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.

Update: We have met this action by creating the policy and launching the policy on our intranet.

- 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.

Update: Both actions have been met with the expansion of our committee members (Hard of Hearing Association and Manitoba Deaf Association) and the launch of our multiple surveys.

- 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.

Update: This action has been met by embedding our accessibility practices into our Procurement guide.

- 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.

Update: In 2024, we reviewed all policies, services and facilities that the WAA offers to passengers and made appropriate adjustments as needed, including holding several training sessions to ensure we are meeting our standards. In collaboration with the Human Resources department, we are constantly reviewing our employee-related barriers and taking action to remove them such as the work we have done with our Recruitment Specialist and the DEIA committee. With the introduction of our intranet, we have removed barriers to the employees across departments. Furthermore, we have started the conversation with the Rick Hansen Foundation for an audit of our architectural and sensory environment. This work will be complete late 2025 or early 2026.

- 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.

Update: This action has been met with the introduction of our two new training models. We will continue to work on training on an ongoing basis.

- 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.

Update: We have started to develop these tools with the WAA Accessibility Guide, which is currently being drafted. In collaboration with the Communications department, we will create tools for our website, including short videos and descriptions. Lastly, we will create a sensory guide for passenger to support pre-planning. This work is due to be complete by late 2025.

- 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 postings that are 500 words or less.

Update: We have onboarded a new member to our mYWG Committee: Level It Up, who will assist us in recruitment process. In collaboration with the Human Resources

department, we will continue to develop plain-language postings and strive for job postings that are 500 words or less. This work will be complete by late 2025.