

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023-2026)



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Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed by the Government of Ontario in 2005 to augment the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) that was adopted in 2001. The purpose of these Acts is to create dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for all individuals within Ontario, and to breakdown barriers for those with disabilities.

The AODA outlines various ways for municipalities, businesses and organizations to achieve a barrier-free province. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) sets requirements that an organization must meet in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan ('Plan') is a requirement under the AODA and the IASR. The Plan offers an organizational strategy to prevent and remove barriers and enact the requirements contained within the standards. It is also a requirement that the Plan be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

Municipality of Meaford's Commitment

The Municipality of Meaford ('Municipality') is committed to ongoing efforts toward achieving the accessibility the requirements of the IASR, as well as making improvements based on innovative ideas and input from its Accessibility Advisory Committee ('AAC'), members of the public, and staff. The Municipality continues to plan to ensure its services, programs and facilities are inclusive and accessible for all.

The Municipality's AAC provides a broader perspective of accessibility needs and provides advice to Council on programs, policies and services to be provided to persons with disabilities. In addition, the Committee offers valuable feedback relating to reviewing site plans and drawings, capital projects and other operating programs and services offered through the Municipality.

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Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Overview

The 2022-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the Municipality is a living document that is designed to continually meet the requirements of the AODA and its standards regulation. In addition to staff input, this Plan was developed through extensive consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and members of the public as the different experiences and background are valuable in creating a Plan that supports an inclusive community through growth and change. With many of the timelines for specific standards having been met by 2021, a key aspect of this Plan will focus on monitoring and improving upon goals and strategies that are already in place, and looking at how to provide better services to the community through new opportunities and public feedback.

The Plan contains a section for each domain of the IASR, as well as an additional section that covers content beyond the scope of the Standards. Each section of the Plan sets out a standard-specific goal and identifies strategies for achieving these goals. The implementation section of the Plan is slightly different than in previous plans as there is no 'year' deadline associated with the goal and strategies. Examples of specific actions to be undertaken are provided at the end of this document, however these are not intended to limit the potential scope of progress toward a barrier-free Municipality of Meaford.

The decision to remove deadlines was made to emphasize that the identified priorities are all important throughout the duration of the Plan and is intended to help promote continual improvement, while still acknowledging that compliance timelines of the IASR will be adhered to. Opportunities to influence accessibility during the term of the Plan will be considered on an ongoing basis. The Plan will inform and work alongside other guiding documents and activities undertaken by the Municipality and community partners. The Municipality will monitor and report on progress toward the Plan's action items annually and will conduct a review and update of the Plan with each new term of Council.

This Plan furthers the municipal commitment to continue building a barrier-free community in which people of all abilities can enjoy the full extent of life.

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The Plan

The plan is developed around the following six areas, outlining goals and strategies for each and defining how the Municipality of Meaford hopes to improve.



1. Information and Communications

Goal: To ensure all information and communications conveyed by the Municipality of Meaford is created, provided, and received in a manner that is accessible to people of all abilities.



2. Employment

Goal: To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Employment Standard and take proactive action to ensure current and future employees do not face barriers at work.



3. Transportation

Goal: To support integrated transit through a manner that meets the needs of all people.



4. Design of Public Spaces

Goal: To ensure accessibility needs are met in newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces where community travels, meets, and gathers.



5. Customer Service

Goal: To prevent, identify, and remove barriers such that people of all abilities have equitable access to goods, services, and facilities.



6. Beyond the AODA

Goal: To create an accessible and inclusive community that is responsive to the needs of and improves well-being and quality of life for persons with disabilities.



1. Information and Communication

Goal: To ensure all information and communications conveyed by the Municipality of Meaford is created, provided, and received in a manner that is accessible to people of all abilities.

“Information and communication are crucial in every-day life, including at work, travelling, shopping. Everyone deserves full access to all information and communication”

– Kovac, 2018

Strategy: To improve the accessibility of communications, the Municipality will use the following strategies:

1. Enhance capacity of all staff producing content intended for the public in an accessible manner.
2. Continue to review the municipal website for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.
3. Consider opportunities to enhance promotion of programs and services that offer content tailored to persons with disabilities.

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2. Employment

Goal: To ensure Municipality of Meaford compliance with the requirements of the Employment Standard and take proactive action to ensure current and future employees do not face barriers at work.

“Employers often overlook candidates with disabilities because they do not understand how capable people with disabilities are... Inclusivity promotes diversity, productivity, reduced absenteeism, talent, and profitability”

– Kovac, 2018

Strategy: To enhance accessibility and inclusion in the workplace, the Municipality will:

4. Review the recruitment process to facilitate participation of all candidates.
5. Provide staff with accessibility training that is specific to their job duties.
6. Continue the periodic review of policies and procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with the Employment Standard.
7. Prepare for future accessibility needs and ensure accommodation requests can be resolved in a timely manner.



3. Transportation

Goal: To support integrated transit through the Municipality of Meaford in a manner that meets the needs of people of all abilities.

“Transportation is a vital part of living. We travel to work, on social outings, and to shop for our basic needs. The Transportation Standard ensures that every person can live fully by moving freely”

– Kovac, 2018

Strategy: To meet the applicable requirements of the AODA Transportation Standard, the Municipality will:

8. Seek opportunities to enhance the Meaford Moves⁺ specialized transit.
9. Undertake efforts to increase ridership of Meaford Moves⁺ specialized transit.
10. Provide input to the County of Grey regarding accessibility of the Grey Transit Route.
11. Strengthen pedestrian linkages.



4. Design of Public Spaces

Goal: To ensure accessibility needs are met in newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces in the Municipality of Meaford where community travels, meets, and gathers.

“Public spaces are everywhere. We enter public space the moment we step out of our front doors to go anywhere, whether it is down the sidewalk to visit a neighbour, to the beach for a day of fun with friends, to the parking lot of the grocery store, or to the playground with our children. The Design of Public Spaces Standard brings us closer to a province where every person can take all these journeys.”

– Kovac, 2019

Strategy: To enhance accessibility and inclusion in the design of public spaces, the Municipality will:

12. Consider elements of Universal Design as the Municipality implements service changes and undertakes lifecycle upgrades of municipal facilities.
13. Ensure all municipal building plans, new construction and significant renovations, are reviewed by the AAC for comments and feedback on accessible design features.
14. Look for ways to provide information to developers through the planning process on the construction of new recreation trails and other public spaces.
15. Promote funding opportunities that support building owners and businesses to undertake accessibility upgrades.
16. Enhance accessibility in outdoor spaces and improve access to nature, including infrastructure for recreation and active transportation.



5. Customer Service

Goal: To prevent, identify, and remove barriers such that people of all abilities have equitable access to goods, services, and facilities in the Municipality.

“All people deserve to access goods, services, and facilities in ways that respect their independence and their dignity. Just as people with disabilities deserve equal opportunities to serve their communities through equal employment, they should also have equal opportunities to be served in ways that respect their needs and wishes.”

– Kovac, 2019

Strategy: To provide accessible customer service, the Municipality will:

17. Provide ongoing and refresher training to employees and volunteers on delivering accessible customer service.
18. Renew and raise awareness of accessibility assets available to the public, in partnership with economic development and tourism.
19. Review and update policies related to service provision to ensure adequate supports are in place for persons with disabilities.
20. Actively encourage public feedback about the way goods, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities.



6. Beyond the AODA

Goal: To create an accessible and inclusive Municipality of Meaford that is responsive to community needs and improves well-being and quality of life for persons of all abilities.

The Municipality of Meaford is strongly committed to accessibility and inclusion and recognizes the opportunities available outside of the legislative requirements to promote accessibility and inclusivity through actions and engagement of stakeholders.

Strategy: Outside of legislative requirements, the Municipality will:

21. Participate in opportunities to educate and raise awareness amongst the public about accessibility and inclusion.
22. Explore partnerships with private sector providers of essential goods and services to make the broader community more accessible.
23. Offer support to organizations, businesses, and institutions to enhance accessibility for their patrons.
24. Leverage grants, plans, programs, and services being implemented to maximize accessibility benefits.

Measuring Impact

In keeping with the requirements of the AODA, the Municipality publishes an annual Accessibility Status Update. Through this annual report, the Municipality will report on progress toward the goals and strategies outlined in the Plan.

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Opportunities for Action

The following table provides sample actions for the strategies listed in the Plan. The sample actions were derived from consultation with members of Municipal staff, members of the public, and the AAC.

Table 1: Strategies and Sample Actions for Information and Communications

#	Description	Sample Actions
1	Enhance capacity of all staff producing content intended for the public to do so in an accessible manner.	Provide enhanced training on accessible documentation to staff producing or overseeing public-facing content. Consider ways to increase availability of stock photos with inclusion and accessibility in the Municipality as a focus.
2	Continue to review the municipal website for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.	Schedule user testing to identify areas for improvement. Plan for periodic website scans to ensure all content is WCAG 2.0 AA compliant and provide enhanced training for website users.
3	Consider opportunities to enhance promotion of programs and services that offer content tailored to persons with disabilities.	Look for new ways to promote programs and services in a variety of formats Partner with Cultural Services to expand programming to include more opportunities for participants of all abilities.

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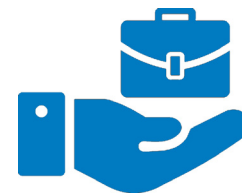


Table 2: Strategies and Sample Actions for Employment

#	Description	Sample Actions
4	Review the recruitment process to facilitate participation of all candidates.	Articulate the availability of accommodations and alternative methods to candidates during the recruitment process.
5	Provide staff with accessibility training that is specific to their job duties.	Develop and implement a job-specific training matrix relating to accessibility legislation, policies, and best practices in providing service to persons with disabilities.
6	Continue with periodic review of policies and procedures to ensure ongoing compliancy with the Employment Standards Act.	Work with HR to remain current and relevant in documentation and ensure all content is communicated to staff for their reference.
7	Prepare for future accessibility needs and ensure accommodation requests can be resolved in a timely manner.	Budget funds specifically for the provision of accommodations that may be sought by current and future employees. Continue to support flexible and non-traditional work arrangements such a work from home.

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Table 3: Strategies and Sample Actions for Transportation

#	Description	Sample Actions
8	Seek opportunities to enhance the Meaford Moves+ specialized transit.	Solicit periodic feedback from specialized transit users. Undertake a review the current specialized services contract. Explore use of Meaford Moves+ including the feasibility for day trips by card holders to retirement residences in neighbouring municipalities.
9	Undertake efforts to increase ridership of Meaford Moves+ specialized transit.	Implement consistent Meaford Moves+ promotional campaigns and seek new opportunities to promote the service. ie. demographic research
10	Provide input to the County of Grey regarding accessibility of the Grey Transit Route.	Attend Grey County Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings to remain aware of efforts relating to County accessible transit provision.
11	Strengthen pedestrian linkages.	Ensure pedestrian crossings are timed to permit safe crossing for people of all abilities. Review snow clearing process for roads and sidewalks as it relates to travelability for persons with disabilities.

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Table 4: Strategies and Sample Actions for Design of Public Spaces

#	Description	Sample Actions
12	Consider elements of Universal Design as the Municipality works toward upgrading municipal facilities and services.	Ensure accessibility is integrated into Community Design Standards and other municipal documents guiding capital projects.
13	Ensure all municipal building plans, new construction and significant renovations are reviewed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee for comments and feedback on accessible design features.	Maintain the internal practice of referencing members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee early in the planning process and consider additional supports to help obtain valuable feedback based on the size of the project.
14	Look for ways to provide information to developers through the planning process on the construction of new recreation trails and other public spaces.	Partner with Development Services to support the information available to developers relating to accessible requirements and opportunities.
15	Promote funding opportunities that support building owners and businesses to undertake accessibility upgrades.	Share information about opportunities to leverage Community Improvement Plan funds and other grant opportunities for accessibility upgrades.
16	Enhance accessibility in outdoor spaces and improve access to nature, including infrastructure for recreation and active transportation.	Identify opportunities and invest in accessible recreation through the budget process. Create and promote opportunities for accessible cycling, including adaptive technology and creative bike sharing solutions. Explore new locations for Mobi Mats. Ensure adequate public seating and rest areas are available in parks and other public spaces.

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Table 5: Strategies and Sample Actions for Customer Service

#	Description	Sample Actions
17	Provide ongoing and refresher training to employees and volunteers on delivering accessible customer service.	Develop internal training supports for training.
18	Renew and raise awareness of accessibility assets, in partnership with economic development and tourism practitioners.	Update and promote online accessible washrooms map. Co-locate accessibility and tourism information. Review accessible parking availability in the Municipality and assess new prospective locations.
19	Review and update policies related to service provision to ensure adequate supports are in place for persons with disabilities.	Consider update to the Recreation Fund Policy to provide for costs associated with a support person required for inclusion in recreation programming. Review opportunities to enhance supports for children with disabilities attending summer camps.
20	Actively encourage public feedback about the manner in which goods, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities.	Promote Accessibility Feedback Form and make an option in feedback dropdown.

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Table 6: Strategies and Sample Actions for Beyond the AODA

#	Description	Sample Actions
21	Participate in opportunities to educate and raise awareness amongst the public about accessibility and inclusion.	Promote accessibility at public events. Review the municipal engagement process to identify enhancements. Continue to recognize and promote awareness events such as National Accessibility Week and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Provide public education regarding mobility scooter safety and other accessibility related topics.
22	Explore partnerships with private sector providers of essential goods and services to make the broader community more accessible.	Collaborate with stakeholders in the local housing sector to make it easier to find an accessible place to live.
23	Offer support to organizations, business, and institutions to enhance accessibility for their patrons.	Promote the Community Improvement Program as a funding mechanism to make accessibility upgrades. Promote available grants to ensure the broader community is aware of opportunities. Connect accessibility-focused organizations with the community to offer additional training.
24	Leverage grants, plans, programs, and services being implemented to maximize accessibility benefits.	Participate in local implementation of the Grey County Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan. Prioritize the accessibility objectives of the Meaford Well-being Plan, including exploring grant and training opportunities.

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Feedback and Contact Information

The Municipality of Meaford encourages feedback from the public on accessibility, including suggestions relating to new initiatives and how we can improve our services. Feedback can be provided at www.meaford.ca/accessibility or by contacting the Legislative Services Division to obtain a paper copy of the feedback form.

Accessibility Coordinator
Legislative Services Division
accessibility@meaford.ca
519-538-1060 extenson 1100

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