

Establishment of the mYWG Accessibility Committee

Guidance

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and best practice examples for stakeholders intending to introduce similar initiatives related to accessibility and assistance to persons with disabilities in an airport environment.</p> <p>The case study is not intended to endorse any technology or provider, but rather provide details of the key considerations as well as various implementation models which could be adopted.</p> <p>The intended audiences may include but are not limited to: Airports, Airlines, Technology Providers, and Regulatory Bodies.</p>
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<p>Scope of this Guidance</p>	<p>This guidance is provided as a source of information to help and support industry players to implement initiatives related to accessibility and assistance to persons with disabilities in and airport environment.</p>
<p>The Case Study Template</p>	<p>In some situations or jurisdictions, a prescribed case study template may be necessary that meets the local requirements of a particular business, organization, or regulatory body. For this guidance document, the following sections provide the general steps involved in developing a business case and/or case studies, including a brief explanation of their purpose, benefits, and considerations.</p>

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND/BUSINESS NEEDS

In 2019, Winnipeg Airports Authority (WAA) established a vision to become Canada's most barrier-free airport. While an ambitious goal, WAA needed to develop a strategy to deliver on commitments related to accessible products and services. The strategy aimed to represent the diversity of the community in which Winnipeg Richardson International Airport is located.

The context in which WAA developed its strategy on accessibility is important. In 2020, the oldest "baby boomer" in Canada turned 74 years old while the youngest turned 56 years old. Similar to other countries with large aging populations, demographic pressures alone forced WAA to evaluate the ways in which it offers services to passengers. Yet, there are additional pressures that make accessibility a priority. For instance, data from 2017 showed that over 6.2 million Canadians have at least one disability. This represents a combined purchasing power of \$55 billion per annum, which could otherwise be lost if travel remains too challenging for individuals with disabilities and their families. WAA recognized, therefore, that focusing on accessibility was both a social and business priority.

The main air terminal building at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport opened in 2011. That the design took place in the early 2000s meant that the built environment considered Universal Design features. However, over the next decade, new services, facilities, and processes for passengers continued to evolve, as well as Canada's regulatory landscape. This resulted in a threat to maintaining accessibility as a top priority, especially for information and communication technology and technological barriers.

As part of its renewed commitment to accessibility, WAA established the mYWG Accessibility Committee. It was created to help realize WAA's vision of providing equal access and participation in travel regardless of perceived differences. Among others, the Committee is based on the guiding principle that continuous oversight leads to continuous improvement. In that way, WAA treats accessibility not unlike its commitment to safety or security.

BENEFITS

The establishment of the mYWG Accessibility Committee ushered in a number of important benefits, whose benefits are difficult to overestimate. One involves ensuring that all products, services, and processes consider lived experience by people with disabilities. It represents one way to validate whether a product, service, or process needs modification or whether a barrier to equal access is erected. When introducing a new service or facility, change orders can be costly and design modification can delay projects. For that reason, validation and consultation with end users is extremely important.

Second, in its advisory capacity, the Committee provides a forum in which conflicts or complaints can be resolved locally without being escalated to higher levels. Higher levels include the formal and regulated complaint process of the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA). Instead, the Committee affords an opportunity to discuss the complaint or challenge, after which a solution is developed. WAA communicates the solution to the individual who experienced the challenge, emphasizing that organizations that represent persons with disabilities had a key role in developing the solution. The Committee, therefore, plays an essential role in maintaining low-level conflict resolution.

Third, the composition of the Committee includes organizations that represent persons with disabilities, WAA staff, and key airline customers. This enables broad discussion about cross-organizational challenges and ensures that attitudinal barriers are addressed in a comprehensive way. Training and awareness initiatives that are delivered in concert with stakeholders provide the best results as opposed to pursuing training independently.

Fourth, based on open consultation and discussion with WAA's community, passengers receive better customer service and take advantage of products and services that enable equal participation.

In most cases, it is difficult to measure the benefits quantitatively. However, WAA receives positive feedback from the community and passengers. Additionally, WAA was awarded the 2020 Accessibility Award by the Province of Manitoba for its programming and commitment to people with disabilities.

CONSTRAINTS

In Canada, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) regulates airports and other federally regulated entities when it comes to accessible travel and consumer protections. Airports and airlines, with very few exceptions, must comply with the federal regulations on accessibility. As a result, there are regulatory constraints within which WAA must operate. As indicated earlier, WAA's main terminal was designed with Universal Design principles in mind. As a result, few physical constraints have presented WAA challenges.

One of the primary constraints to establishing the Committee involved establishing and growing partnerships to ensure adequate representation. WAA invested significant time into establishing relationships with organizations that represent persons with disabilities across the region and demonstrated commitment to their respective organizations.

In general, establishing the Committee did not require additional capital or operating expense. However, it does require recurring time and effort from staff to develop programming, review policies and practices, as well as organize events.

Key enablers to make similar initiatives successful include developing a clear Terms of Reference (ToR). This outlines expectations for the Committee and helps contributors understand the degree to which organizations need to commit time and resources.

TECHNOLOGY, PROCESS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED

Strictly speaking, no new technologies, infrastructure, or services are required to create a similar initiative. However, based on the feedback from the Committee and the community, WAA has developed programming and policies that reflect some of the barriers passengers with disabilities have encountered while travelling.

For example, WAA has implemented an Accessible Procurement Policy that reflects the need not only to identify and remove barriers, but also prevent ones from being implemented in the first place. Additionally, this policy enables WAA to influence its business partners and vendor relationships by ensuring business is conducted with like-minded companies.

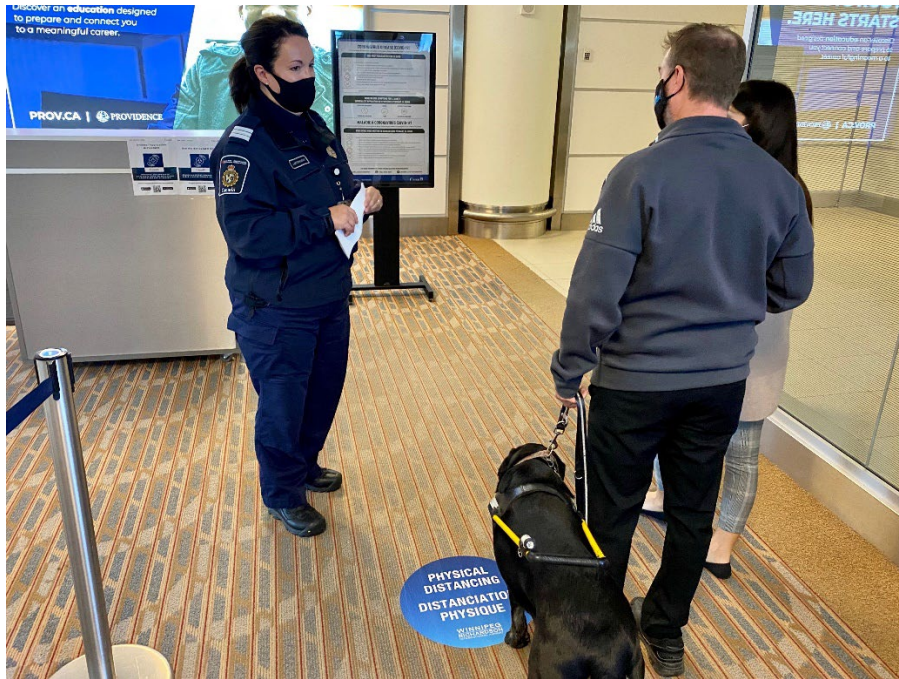
Other new processes were introduced as a result of the Committee's work and guidance. This includes feedback and a reporting structure to ensure that WAA addresses concerns about accessibility expeditiously, as well as a Passenger Rehearsal Program (PRP). The PRP is a customized, one-on-one tour for persons with disabilities and their caregivers or families to "rehearse" an upcoming itinerary at the airport. The PRP can be accessed anytime by contacting WAA. Additionally, the Committee gave rise to new plans and processes, including an Accessibility Plan (2020-2023), which outlines WAA's objectives related to accessibility and equal access on a three-year planning horizon. It helps guide decision making at an organizational level and reflects the needs of passengers with disabilities.

LESSONS LEARNED

WAA's journey in accessibility and equal access has been one of continuous oversight. The Committee provides one way in which equal access can be incorporated into all elements of WAA's organizational culture and services. Further, WAA recognizes that providing exceptional passenger experience and services for people with disabilities requires constant dialogue with the community. WAA represents the diversity of the community in which the airport is located and remains committed to ensuring a barrier-free experience. The Committee has fundamentally supported WAA in reconciling challenges of the present while strategizing about the future.

PICTURES and PRINTS

CBSA and service dog



Passenger rehearsal



YWG lived experience focus group





WINNIPEG
AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

mYWG Accessibility Committee Terms of Reference (ToR)

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Winnipeg
Richardson
International Airport
(YWG)

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mYWG Accessibility Committee Terms of Reference (ToR)

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To promote co-operative and effective communications on accessibility issues.
- 1.2 To reflect the diversity of Winnipeg and promote inclusion at YWG.
- 1.3 To solicit feedback from the community on accessibility and to incorporate appropriate solutions.

2.0 ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES:

2.1 The Committee Chair:

- WAA representative will be provided by the Winnipeg Airports Authority (WAA)
- Cooperatively produces meeting agenda with committee members
- Will ensure the proper flow of issues being discussed by the committee members and WAA

2.2 Committee members will:

- Attend meetings
- Aim for consensus on resolutions

2.3 The Committee will review and recommend changes to policies, practices, and procedures related to issues of access and disabilities.

2.3.1 For clarity, “disability” is defined as a physical, mental, intellectual, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.

2.4 The Committee Chair will table these concerns and issues for discussion at the next meeting of the Committee.

2.5 Working committees or working groups may be set up to deal with specific concerns and issues upon request of the members of the Committee.

3.0 MEMBERSHIP:

3.1 The Committee shall be comprised of the following members:

- Chair - WAA Representative or Senior Representative
- Appointed Members - Six to ten representatives from various organizations of persons with disabilities, seniors and/or children
 - One to two representatives from WAA's Airline Operators Committee
- 3.2 An infrastructure specialist from WAA will attend meetings to provide insight on design.
- 3.3 After serving for 2 years, a member or a member's organization will be notified and requested to either have the current member continue their service or appoint a new representative.
- 3.4 Members missing two consecutive meetings will be requested by the Chair to reconfirm their interest or resign.
- 3.5 Upon acceptance of these Terms of Reference, 50% of members will be given a 2 year term, and 50% will be given a 3 year term. All subsequent terms will follow 3.3.

4.0 MEETINGS:

- 4.1 Meetings will be held twice a year. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as requested.
- 4.2 The Chair will meet quarterly with the WAA infrastructure specialist to review any issues raised on barrier-free environment(s). Minutes of these meetings will be provided to committee members.
- 4.3 Notice of the location of a meeting will be published in the preceding minutes.
- 4.4 Items of concern and issues for the agenda should be forwarded to the Chair three weeks prior to a scheduled meeting, in order for members to receive the agenda two weeks before a scheduled meeting.
- 4.5 WAA will provide secretarial services and a Sign Language Interpreter on request. Minutes will be taken and provided to Committee members. The minutes will be available in alternative formats on request.