



Accessibility Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Winnipeg Folk Festival (WFF) is a year-round arts organization that presents one of North America's premier outdoor music festivals each July.

The WFF is committed to creating an accessible environment and welcomes all abilities and inclusion is a priority. We have assembled an Accessibility Advisory Group to identify, remove and prevent barriers to offer the best festival experience possible.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), passed unanimously in 2013, has the goal of significantly increasing accessibility in Manitoba by 2023. The AMA provides a framework for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility. It applies to all public, private and non-profit organizations in Manitoba that have more than one employee and provide a good or service. All public sector organizations are required to develop accessibility plans and to make them public. Compliance with the AMA will be guided by five accessibility standards. These standards relate to customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation and design and construction.

As a non-profit organization, the WFF is not required to develop an accessibility plan. However, because inclusiveness - creating an environment that is welcoming, safe, accessible and respectful - is one of the festival's core values, the organization chose to develop one. The WFF has also committed to meeting the accessibility standards according to the public sector timeline instead of the later timeline for non-profit organizations.

The WFF continues to make improvements to its festival site and build awareness with its staff and volunteers to ensure that it can do as much as possible to create a festival experience where all individuals, regardless of their abilities, are able to attend and enjoy.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

The following statement is posted on the WFF website:

At the WFF, we believe that accessibility means participation for all people. We commit to achieving as full accessibility as possible in partnership with the people we support, their support networks and our staff and volunteers. We commit to meeting or exceeding our obligations under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The WFF commits to sharing expertise on accessibility and to advocating for the rights for all people.

ACCESSIBILITY ACHIEVEMENTS

The WFF has had a long-standing commitment to continuous improvements to accessibility at the festival site and with services offered. To that end, these initiatives have been implemented over the years:

A: What the WFF Offers

- Free admission for support persons helping a disabled person to attend the festival through an Accessibility Pass. Accessibility application form available at <https://www.winnipegfolkfestival.ca/festival-info/accessibility/>
- Text versions of selected sections of the program book are available online for screen-reading software.
- Accessible mobile application available for download on iOS and Android devices.
- The WFF is committed to booking accessible venues for year-round events.

B: Getting There

- Free shuttle service that runs from downtown Winnipeg to the festival site. All buses are wheelchair accessible.
- Accessible parking for individuals who have a valid disability parking permit is located in festival west parking lot close to the Main Gate. The festival provides 150 accessible parking spots. These spots are located in the first four rows closest to the entrance and all fall within the recommended 320' from the entrance and allow for 8' of width per stall.

C: Once You Get There

- Accessible seating area available at the Main Stage.

Paths leading to the public areas of the festival are wide and without steps or barriers. The ground may be uneven and patrons with limited mobility or wheelchair users may require assistance. Paths resurfaced in 2023 to take out divots / large rocks for easier traveling.

- Low counter at the Main Gate box office.
- Our Square POS system to make purchases with debit or credit cards has TalkBack options available for visually impaired or blind people.
- ATM is accessible for wheelchairs and low/no vision – 37" high; with keypads.

- All food vendors are provided with a low counter and additional lighting was installed in the food village to provide greater visibility.
- Wheelchair accessible porta-pottie at every bank of porta-potties on the festival site.
- Wheelchair charging stations at Audience Services tent and at the accessible seating area at Main Stage.
- Accessible porta-pottie located near the Main Stage seating area.
- Sign language interpretation offered at select stages.
- Adult changing facility by the First Aid & Wellness tent.
- Trained Service animals are welcome. A disabled person can be accompanied by their trained service animal to all areas available to the public.
- Accessibility Liaison crew is available to support patrons and volunteers with accessibility needs. Contact accessibility@winnipegfolkfestival.ca in advance of the festival or call 204-560-1677 during the weekend to be connected to an Accessibility Liaison.

Campgrounds

- Accessible camping area available in the RV section of the Festival Campground. Parking is close to the accessible camping area, and there is a washroom with accessible stalls nearby. There are a limited number of outlets available to power essential medical devices.
- Accessible camping in the Quiet Campground is in Area 7. This area allows for parking close to the tenting area and has an accessible path from the communal shelter to the toilet building with an accessible stall. Limited power can be made available to charge essential medical devices.
- Campers requiring access to electrical to charge essential medical devices are asked to let us know in advance by emailing accessibility@winnipegfolkfestival.ca so we can do our best to accommodate.
- Accessibility Liaison crew is available to support patrons and volunteers with accessibility needs. Contact accessibility@winnipegfolkfestival.ca in advance of the festival or call 204-560-1677 during the weekend to be connected to an Accessibility Liaison.

D: Education & Training

- In partnership with Manitoba Possible, all WFF volunteers and staff are trained in Manitoba's new accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.
- Additional training is held annually in partnership with Independent Living Resource Centre and is offered to the festival's security volunteers.

E: Website Communications

- An Accessibility section of the website outlines the festival’s activities in this area and improvements to date. Downloadable versions of schedules without background graphics are also available on the website.
- The following adjustments have been made to the website:
 - Left-justified text.
 - Colours are good for reading and a sans serif font used for easier readability.
 - Website testing done by individuals with different abilities.
 - Added speech recognition software functionality
 - Added the ability to use the tab button as a means to move around the website for those who do not use a mouse.
- Accessible Web app for screen readers available for download to smart phones

F: Emergency Systems

- The WFF emergency system includes a specially designed communication plan, predetermined safety points and special exit and safety strategies for disabled people.
- The security volunteers are specially trained to support patrons and volunteers with accessibility needs in the event of an emergency.

G: Organizational

- Accessibility Advisory Group created for regular consultation on achievements, barriers and best practices.
- Accessibility consultation through an annual patron survey.

H: Volunteering at the Winnipeg Folk Festival

- The WFF recruits a broad range of equity-seeking groups and individuals to volunteer at the festival such as (but not limited to): Indigenous, Black and people of colour; 2SLGBTQIA+; new Canadians; persons of low socio-economic status and/or disabled people.
- Accessibility passes available for volunteers requiring a support person.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

The WFF is located in a natural outdoor setting in Birds Hill Provincial Park and therefore, accessibility can be a challenge, especially with roads and pathways which can be uneven. While steady progress has been made, especially as part of a site redevelopment project in 2013, regular maintenance is required and the cost of ensuring all areas of the festival site are fully accessible is significant. Other barriers to progress will be time, available human resources and difficulties making environmental changes to a provincial park.

There are some additional issues of which the WFF is aware:

- Temporary fencing should be in contrasting colours (white matches the colour of the tents and trucks and is affected by sun glare)

Challenge: Only green and white fencing is readily available and green blends into the environment too much so white is used as the best option.

- Guy-wires and stakes from tents (tripping hazard) should be well marked, especially in shaded areas or high traffic areas

Challenge: Efforts are made to mark as many stakes and wires as possible – but given the quantity of tents can't maintain them all at all times.

- Sign language interpreters should be available at emergency sites, Audience Services and first aid stations as well as stages

Challenge: Having interpreters at every location is cost-prohibitive, however there is an American Sign Language crew that works to provide the most effective service with the resources available. In addition, the free accessibility pass is in place to ensure people can have their needs met in this and similar manners.

- Accessible camping in the Festival Campground that is closer to the festival itself would be an asset.

Challenge: Due to site limitations in the general group use area where the campground is located, the festival is not able to create an area in the Festival Campground that allows for the proximity to power, parking and accessible toilets that the RV area offers.

ON THE RADAR SCREEN

There are some additional challenges to using the site that the festival knows about and is working on solutions for the longer term:

- ~~Creating camping amenities that are more in line with the accessibility needs of most campers, including a campground liaison to support with easier entrance and access to amenities.~~
- Long distances between stages are a part of the festival experience that can be difficult for those with mobility issues. Having an on-site tram shuttle would help to facilitate easier transport. On-site scooter rental would also reduce barriers in terms of walking such a large site.

VISITING THE WINNIPEG OFFICE

- We organize our office space so that there is room for people with wheelchairs, electric scooters and walkers.

- Our seating in the office accommodates people of varying sizes and abilities.
- We keep hallways, aisles, entrance area, reception areas, waiting rooms and meeting rooms free of clutter.
- We keep our office entrance area clear of ice and snow.
- We place standing signs out of the way to avoid tripping hazards.

FEEDBACK ON ACCESSIBILITY

We welcome and respond promptly to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our goods and services. We document the actions we take to respond to the feedback we receive, and that information is available on request in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.

- We invite feedback in the following ways:
 - Visit our reception or service desk in person.
 - Contact us by phone 204-231-0096.
 - Email accessibility@winnipegfolkfestival.ca.
 - Feedback on our accessibility initiatives will be solicited through our patron and volunteer surveys.
 - An accessibility survey/feedback form will be emailed out to everyone on our accessibility pass list on an annual basis.
- All feedback is directed to the WFF management team who determines what action, if any, should occur.
- If the feedback requires us to follow-up, the patron, volunteer and/or employee is notified that the request is being reviewed and when they can expect a response.
 - We let the patron, volunteer and/or employee know what action we will take to address their feedback, if any.
- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.