



 **Age Friendly**
Saskatchewan



CREATING AN AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS IN SASKATCHEWAN

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Age-Friendly Business
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For more information:

Background information on the Age-Friendly Movement, as well as tools, resources, and best practices, are available at:

www.agefriendlysk.ca

www.skseiorsmechanism.ca

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

For statistical data on your community, which can help you better understand the demographics of customers in your market area, you can visit:

- Statistics Canada (www.statcan.gc.ca)

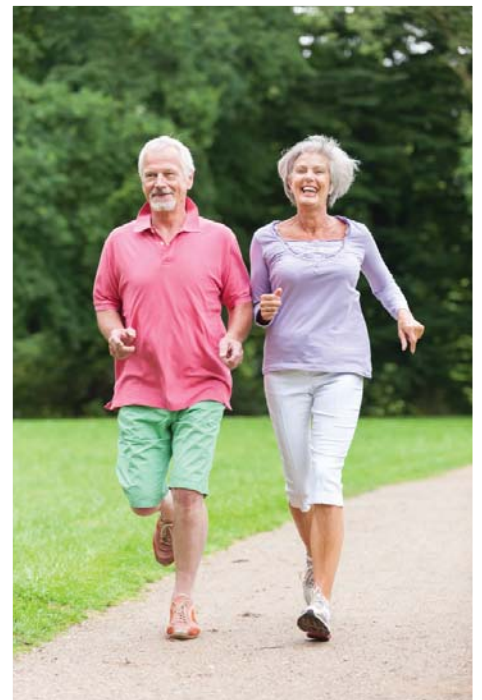
BUILDING AGE-FRIENDLY SASKATCHEWAN

Age-Friendly Communities is a global initiative started by the World Health Organization. It promotes healthy, accessible, inclusive communities where all people are valued, included & supported. Age-friendly communities are those where the physical and social environment (the structures, settings, services and programs) support and enable active aging. They take into account obstacles citizens may face in day-to-day living, as well as the ease of getting from place to place. Moreover, they consider how safe the communities are for all citizens and what amenities are available. Urban governments have a host of considerations as they assess their communities to determine age-friendliness.

Age-Friendly Communities that have achieved certain milestones are eligible for provincial recognition. **The Government of Saskatchewan is “pleased to be able to help the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan initiative by providing recognition to communities that have achieved the appropriate requirements”.**

(Jim Reiter, Minister of Health) Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) will oversee the process for evaluation of communities and work with the Provincial Government on recognition.

It is important for the business community to be age-friendly so that all community members can access any business, be well-served, enjoy whatever the business has to offer, and feel well cared for and valued. An age-friendly business serves people of all ages and abilities.



BUSINESS

A Vital Part of the Community

No Saskatchewan community would be complete without the business sector. Saskatchewanians depend on local businesses for countless aspects of their day-to-day lives. Businesses play vital roles in meeting the needs and demands of citizens — everything from food and shelter, to personal care and home maintenance services.

Given its importance, the involvement of the business community is crucial in making a community more age-friendly.



AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

A Good Business

Making your business more age-friendly is not only a socially responsible thing to do, it's also good for business.

Consider the following:

- People who have enjoyable experiences are more likely to become loyal customers. If your business is an age-friendly, accessible and welcoming place for people of all circumstances, it can translate into repeat business. Satisfied customers will tell others and this can increase your business.
- Today's older adults are healthier, more educated and more affluent than previous generations of seniors. That represents a lot of potential revenue if your business is more age-friendly.
- Becoming more age-friendly opens your business up to a larger pool of potential customers. Age-friendliness makes your business accessible and welcoming to more than mainstream citizens. It also makes your business accessible and welcoming to persons with disabilities, people with reduced mobility, people with limited sight or hearing, young families, people from different cultures, those who speak a variety of languages, and many other members of the community. A broader customer base means greater opportunity.



- Businesses not only depend on having customers, but also on their ability to recruit and retain workers. An age-friendly business is a more attractive and more welcoming place for workers.
- Making your business more age-friendly also serves as a powerful expression of social responsibility. If your community has set a goal of becoming an age-friendly community, your efforts to create an age-friendly business will demonstrate a clear commitment to making your community stronger. This will be noticed and appreciated by all citizens, enhancing your business' reputation and goodwill.



What Makes a Business Age-Friendly

An age-friendly community is one where all residents, regardless of their circumstances, can fully and meaningfully participate. Similarly, an age-friendly business is one that all residents, regardless of their circumstances, can patronize and enjoy.

Consider the things that make a shopping or dining experience enjoyable or what elements of a service experience will leave people feeling cared for and well-served. Depending on the nature of your business, the specifics will probably be unique. However, there are some elements of age-friendliness that are common for almost all businesses:

Comfort

A comfortable customer is a happy customer. An age-friendly business has elements such as:

- places to sit while waiting;
- places to set down packages;
- chairs that are sturdy, with arms that people can use to help themselves up and down; and
- an easily accessible customer washroom.

Visibility

- having customer service desks in clearly visible locations, so that people can ask for assistance easily;
- keeping background noise to a minimum, to help customers hear and be heard in conversations with each other and with service staff;
- using signage with good contrast, to make it easier to see;
- having plenty of glare-free lighting in your business so that customers can navigate well;

- ensuring printed information is easy to follow;
- providing telephone answering services that use real people rather than automated services and minimizing the number of automated menus and button pushes that telephone callers must go through before speaking with a live person; and
- training staff to effectively assist customers with hearing, vision and other challenges (e.g., speaking clearly at appropriate speed; looking directly at customers, etc.).

Safety

- sturdy railings and banisters to help prevent falls;
- a minimal number of stairs;
- floor surfaces that are non-slip, especially when wet; wider aisles to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs;
- clear aisles and pathways, with no tripping hazards;
- easily opened or automatic doors; and
- area rugs that are low-piled and secured.

Respect

- treating customers with patience and understanding;
- training staff to act in a professional manner;
- training staff to have sensitivity for customers and not fall back on stereotypes or presumptions;
- providing options for staff to serve customers in ways that are most comfortable for the customer (e.g. a private place to sit down and talk);
- responding to errors and concerns promptly and courteously; and
- training staff to handle incidents (e.g. falls, outbursts) in ways that maintain professionalism and preserve the customer's dignity.

If your business is a:

Grocery Store

consider:

- four-foot wide aisles;
- price labels in large, legible print;
- easy, stair-free access;
- a carry-out service;
- places for people to sit and rest;
- a volunteer shopping/delivery program.

Restaurant

consider:

- a drop-off area at the door;
- sufficient space between dining tables to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs;
- sturdy chairs with arms;
- menus and bills with large, easy to read print;
- accessible washrooms.

Pharmacy

consider:

- automatic doors;
- clear, uncluttered aisles;
- magnifying glasses for customers to use for reading print on product labels;
- private areas for customers to sit and have discussions with the pharmacist.

Bank

consider:

- counters at wheelchair or scooter height;
- automated teller machines that can be used by someone in a wheelchair;
- private areas to meet with customers;
- information using large print;
- staff trained to spot financial abuse.

Making Your Business More Age-Friendly

If you're committed to making your business more age-friendly, a helpful first step is to conduct an age-friendly assessment of your business.

An assessment will help you gain a better understanding of how your business currently appears to people of varying life circumstances. It will help you determine how age-friendly your business is today.

Using that information, you can then chart a course for improvement.

Conducting an Assessment

1. Start by reviewing the “Age-Friendly Business Checklist” provided in the Appendix of this guide. Familiarize yourself with the various categories and elements in the checklist. Some of these may be more applicable than others, depending on the nature of your business.
2. Place yourself in the shoes of someone else, such as an older person, a person with reduced mobility or a person with sight or hearing challenges. Try to examine your business from their perspective as you take a look around your business.
3. With the checklist in hand, systematically assess the various aspects of your business. Some of these will be tangible aspects, such as the physical structure and assets that make up your business. Others will be more intangible, but just as important — for example, the conduct of staff and the service that customers receive.
4. Get some additional opinions to further inform your assessment. You might consider asking an older friend or relative to help you with the assessment, to better gain an alternative

perspective of your business. When it comes to assessing the service experience, you might want to ask someone to find a “secret shopper” with the goal of assessing the age-friendliness of the customer experience.

5. Customers, potential customers and staff can also provide insights. Gaining their firsthand opinions through a survey, focus group or other information-gathering strategy will further inform your age-friendly assessment.

Taking Action

Once you’ve completed your age-friendly assessment, consider what actions you can take to make your business more age-friendly.

- Have a look at the results on the age-friendly checklist. Are there certain areas where you rated your business as “Needs Work” or “Fair”? Is there a pattern to these ratings? These might be areas you want to consider as priorities for action.
- You might also find room for improvement in a number of areas that seem minor. Don’t discount these. Actions to become more age-friendly don’t necessarily need to be large and expensive. A number of limited actions can add up to a big impact.
- Find out if your municipality or local council has committed to becoming a more age-friendly community. If so, contact them and let them know about your efforts to make your business more age-friendly. They may be able to provide information, links and other resources to help you take action.



Dementia Friendly Communities

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Communities initiative strives to create communities throughout Saskatchewan that are welcoming to people with dementia, that support them to live well, and engage them meaningfully in everyday life.

For this initiative, "Communities" refers to not only municipalities such as cities or towns, but also businesses, faith-based groups, or other social groups such as book clubs and more. In a dementia friendly community, stigma and social isolation will be reduced and those affected by dementia will be supported to feel independent and included, with options for involvement in the community. The people in these communities will understand more about dementia, and recognize that a person with dementia may experience the world differently. Dementia Friendly Communities also addresses considerations for built environment and design.

Age friendly and dementia friendly communities share many of the same goals, but there are also unique differences between the initiatives. Many dementia friendly considerations also provide benefit to the aged, but not all age friendly considerations meet the needs of people affected by dementia. Age friendly communities may also wish to consider additional dementia friendly information to ensure they are able to meet the needs of all community members.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan has resources available that offer information about the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative. Individuals can also become **Dementia Friends**, to build Dementia Friendly Communities, one Friend at a time. **To learn more about the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Initiatives, or to become a Dementia Friend, visit www.DementiaFriendlySaskatchewan.ca**

APPENDIX

Age-Friendly Business Checklist

Use the following checklist to undertake an age-friendly assessment of your business.

Examine different aspects of your business, as listed in the following categories. Assess each aspect and give it a rating according to the following system:

Excellent = 4
Good = 3
Fair = 2
Needs Work = 1
Does Not Apply = N/A

Outside

- Sidewalk access is level and well-maintained.
- Curbs are cut and ramps are in place to allow for walkers, wheelchairs, strollers and easier access.
- Pick-up and drop-off areas are convenient, sheltered and clearly marked. Sidewalks and parking lots have sufficient lighting.
- Accessible parking spaces are designated and enforced.
- Parking lots and sidewalks are promptly cleared of snow, ice and other hazards. Parking signage, including parking meters, have large and clear print, and use clear instructions.
- Surface in the parking lot is smooth, without major cracks, bumps or potholes.
- Entrances to the business are kept clear of obstructions.
- Entrance doors open automatically or have access buttons.
- At least one entrance is at grade level.
- Doors are sufficiently wide for wheelchairs.
- Wheelchair access routes are well marked.

Safety of Customers

- Stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides.
- Stair edges are clearly marked.
- Flooring is non-slip and non-shiny.
- Mats are placed where necessary and are well secured.
- Elevators are available.
- Ramps are in place for changes in elevation.
- Obstacles (e.g. steps up and down, wet floor, etc.) are clearly marked.
- Aisles are wide enough for two walkers or two wheelchairs (approximately four feet).
- Aisles are not cluttered by displays or objects.
- Locations of elevators, washrooms and other amenities are clearly posted.
- A store map with large print is located near the entrance.
- Popular items are shelved at medium height.
- Staff are trained to assist customers as needed in the event of an emergency, including evacuation.
- A Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) is available.
- Website is secure.

Mobility and Accessibility

- Sturdy, regular-height seating is available in waiting areas and line-up areas. At least one customer service area is accessible for persons in wheelchairs. Service counters have a place to hook a cane so that it does not fall.
- There is space near the entrance for customers to park scooters.
- An on-line or phone-in ordering (and delivery) service is available.
- Carry-out service is available to assist customers with their purchases. Telephones have large print buttons and amplification abilities.
- Customer washrooms are available on all service floors.
- Washrooms contain at least one accessible toilet cubicle and hand washing area.

Comfort, Visibility and Hearing

- Has good lighting that offers sufficient and even illumination.
- Signage uses large, easy-to-read lettering and good contrast (e.g. black letters on white background).
- Printed materials (e.g. packages, price labels, etc.) have good contrast and use readable sizes of lettering.
- Sound or speaker systems for public announcements are clear and not over-used.
- Background music in the business is absent, so that customers can hear conversations clearly.
- Temperature is at comfortable level.
- Quiet space is provided for discussing private business such as medications, finances or sensitive concerns.
- Website is easy to navigate.

Customer Service and Respect

- Staff members are trained to assist customers who have vision, hearing or other challenges.
- Staff members speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while looking at the customer.
- Staff members are trained to move to private areas to discuss private matters with customers.
- Staff members are trained to be sensitive to customers with varying circumstances and avoid stereotyping or condescending behaviours. (For example, speaking too loudly, showing impatience or speaking too familiarly.)
- Staff members are friendly and patient with customers.
- Errors and customer concerns are addressed promptly and courteously.
- Staff members are trained to manage situations, such as falls or outbursts, in ways that preserve a person's dignity.
- Staff members are trained to identify if a person is experiencing a medical emergency and can notify appropriate authorities.
- Promotional materials include depictions of people of varying ages and abilities.

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