



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2024

GENERAL

Executive Summary

Southern Oaks LTD is committed to building a culture of inclusivity and accessibility. Not only is this part of our company culture but opening access to employees is imperative to our continued growth and competitiveness as an employer in the trucking sector. We will contribute to a barrier-free Canada for everyone by building an accessibility framework that will support employees and the public we serve to have the best experience possible with our services, products and facilities.

Southern Oaks LTD. is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders, including clients, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and any visitors who enter the premises, access information provided by the company, or use the company's goods and services.

We know creating a barrier-free environment takes time and we are dedicated to the ongoing identification, removal and prevention of barriers. This Accessibility Plan will guide our organization in meeting our accessibility commitments and in building an accessibility-confident culture.

This accessibility plan contains details of the company policies, practices, and services in relation to the identification and removal of barriers. This plan is also used to establish prevention measures against new barriers emerging to ensure a barrier-free environment at Southern Oaks LTD.

This accessibility plan can be offered in any of the following formats upon request: print, large print, braille and electronic within 15 days or in braille or audio within 45 days after a request has been received.

This plan was developed to recognize and understand the needs of those with disabilities and to address gaps in areas of the business and the facility in which we operate. For this reason, this plan was developed in consultation with employees who identify as having a disability via employee surveys, roundtable discussions and 1-1 interviews.

A summary of initial opportunities include:

- Improving the attraction of persons with disabilities to jobs in our company and the trucking sector.
- Expanding the range and options for accommodation, especially for drivers.
- Being better prepared to provide information in accessible formats when requested.
- Improving the knowledge of our IT team and leveraging the capabilities of accessibility features in current and future IT equipment, programs and systems.
- Initiating processes where there is a more thorough review and a “through an accessibility lens” approach to the assessment of facilities, procurement procedures, company programs, new initiatives and on-going services.

Your Input and Feedback

Southern Oaks LTD welcomes feedback on our Accessibility Plan from the public, employees and our stakeholders. This feedback is valuable to us as it helps us break down accessibility barriers and build on our commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

If you have an inquiry or feedback, please use one of the contact methods below. We will respond to feedback in a timely manner. Feedback can also be provided anonymously if desired by telephone, E-mail or mail. If you require support while providing feedback let us know and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

<i>Contact: Jen Poirier – Human Resources</i>
<i>Mailing Address: 3191 County Rd. 11 Harrow, ON N0R1G0</i>
<i>Email: jen@southernOaksltd.com</i>
<i>Telephone: 519-738-6885 (ext. 233)</i>

Statement of Commitment

At Southern Oaks LTD we are committed to making our organization and the services we provide accessible to employees, including persons with disabilities. Canadians have the right to benefit from our services equally and those who work with us have the right to perform their jobs free of barriers.

Reporting Our Plan

As required by the Accessible Canada Act, we will publish a status report every year that measures our progress against our commitments. We will also review and update our Accessibility Plan every three years. Progress Reports and updates to our Accessibility Plan will be shaped by consultation with persons with disabilities.

ADDRESSING AREAS IDENTIFIED IN THE ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

Employment

The "employment" area ensures that candidates and employees with disabilities and those who experience barriers are supported throughout the entire employment lifecycle. Southern Oaks LTD understands that improving workplace accessibility and ensuring an accessible recruitment and selection process for applicants with disabilities can contribute to a more diverse and welcoming workplace culture.

We have implemented the following policies, programs, practices, and services to identify, remove, and prevent new and existing barriers in relation to employment:

- Where necessary, accommodations are being made during the recruitment and selections stages, and throughout the employment lifecycle.
- All Training and development programs provided will consider an employee's barriers and abilities, and are provided in alternative formats, such as large print, braille, audio and electronic.

Barrier #1:

Our company continues to face competition for employees and currently is not attracting enough applicants from underrepresented populations such as persons with disabilities.

Actions:

- Enhance the employment section of our website to increase visibility to Canadians with disabilities of the various jobs available in the trucking sector, highlighting our commitment to their inclusion in our workforce.
- Educate hiring managers on accessibility and how they can ensure a barrier-free hiring, selection and accommodation process. Create a training booklet on strategies for working with people who have disabilities.

Built Environment

The "built environment" area ensures that workspaces and the work environment are accessible for employees. Southern Oaks LTD will work to ensure that elements of the built environment, including building interiors and exteriors, are designed to facilitate barrier-free access to goods or services. We have implemented the following policies, programs, practices, and services to identify, remove, and prevent new and existing barriers in relation to the built environment:

- Zero-step entrance located at the front of the building;

- Push automatic door openers

Southern Oaks LTD remains committed to addressing existing barriers and preventing new barriers in the built environment. After a thorough review of the policies, programs, practices, and services, and through feedback and consultations, the following barriers were identified that continue to exist in the built environment at our company:

Barrier #2:

Safety signage in our buildings and truck yard is not visible with low vision.

Actions:

- Install tactile walking surface indicators to warn of hazards at the tops of stairways.
- Improve illumination of current yard.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Southern Oaks LTD understands that communication to and within the company is vital to an individual's access to our services. We have implemented the following information and communication technologies to allow individuals to communicate with us:

- Accessible formats including: print, large print, audio, and electronic;

To help ensure compliance with these services, we have implemented the following policies, programs, practices, and services to identify, remove, and prevent new and existing barriers in relation to information and communication technology:

- Upon request, we will provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports for employees, applicants, or persons accessing our company's services. Such accessible formats and communication supports are conversion-ready and are provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost.
 - We will consult with the individuals to determine the specific barrier and the best way to provide support.
 - We will develop a work team consisting of managers, drivers, persons with disabilities to assess and identify options for a wider range and variety of potential accommodations.
 - Management will determine and implement an accommodation budget to allow for assistive equipment such as ramps, enhanced audio, illumination improvements etc.
- "Information and communication technologies" are various technological tools used to send, store, create, share or exchange information.

Barrier #3:

The current management team is not well versed in accessibility technology and does not know how to assist persons with disabilities in the workplace.

Actions:

- Train the management team to increase their accessibility knowledge and learn how to adapt services and improve interactions with persons with disabilities.
- Promote guidance for training documents for persons with disabilities (e.g., making items larger on a screen, activating reader on MS Word)

Barrier #4:

The inaccessibility of technologies in commonly used meeting and collaboration spaces can limit the ability of facilitators and attendees to participate meaningfully.

Actions:

- Review the technology used in common conference, learning and meeting spaces to ensure that it meets a high level of accessibility and respects legal and policy requirements.

Communication Other Than ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)

Southern Oaks LTD understands that communication to and within our company can take many forms and requires a variety of options to be inclusive of all individuals.

We remain committed to addressing existing barriers and preventing new barriers in relation to communication other than ICT. After a thorough review of the policies, programs, practices, and services, and through feedback and consultations, the following barriers were identified that continue to exist in relation to communication other than ICT at our company:

Barrier #5:

The Company does not have a consistent process to ensure alternate formats of communication that it issues to employees and other stakeholders are available and provided in a timely manner.

Actions:

- Create alternate formats, where appropriate and when needed. Prepare standard resources and commonly issued company communication in alternative formats so that they are ready to be distributed upon request.
- When asked, we commit to providing these alternate formats as soon as possible and within time frames listed in the Accessible Canada Regulations in print, large print, braille, audio format, and electronic format that's compatible with adaptive technology meant to help people with disabilities.

Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Southern Oaks LTD is committed to ensuring that all individuals can obtain our company's services. We have implemented the following methods to allow individuals to obtain our services:

- Online website orders
- Telephone orders

The "procuring (buying) goods, services and facilities" area ensures that accessibility is considered at the beginning of the buying process.

Southern Oaks LTD is committed to ensuring that all its services and facilities are accessible to all individuals. The company has implemented the following methods to allow individuals to access our services and facilities:

- Zero-step entrance located at the front of the building;
- Automatic door openers;

Barrier #6:

Southern Oaks LTD's procurement procedures need to be reviewed for accessibility requirements.

Actions:

- Review the procurement procedures to include accessibility checks when buying goods and services.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Southern Oaks is committed to ensuring that all its programs and services are designed in a manner accessible to all individuals. When designing and delivering our company's internal and external programs and services, accessibility considerations must be part of the process right from the very start.

Barrier #7:

Currently there is no standard approach for ensuring programs, processes and services have taken accessibility into account.

Actions:

- Review current programs and services and provide input prior to the development of future programs and services.

- Create an Accessibility Checklist to help ensure key accessibility considerations are considered.
- Provide training on the Accessible Canada Act and Accessible Canada Regulations for those whose role is to develop processes and procedures.

Transportation

Southern Oaks LTD does not coordinate a transportation system, or a fleet of transportation vehicles as defined in the Accessible Canada Act. This means that standards for transportation are not in the scope of this plan. Southern Oaks LTD strives to ensure accessible transportation services are available for persons with a disability. The company has implemented the following methods to ensure accessible transportation:

- Zero-step entrance located at the front of the building;
- Paved entrance and parking lot

CONSULTATIONS

To align with Southern Oaks LTD's commitment to make our workplace environment accessible to the employees, we have developed our Accessibility Plan in consultation with our employees, including those with disabilities. Southern Oaks LTD recognizes that persons with disabilities are equal participants in all areas of life. Our company is guided by the recognized principles of the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;
- All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they can and want to have regardless of their disabilities;
- All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;
- All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;
- Policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments, and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination persons face;
- Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

We gathered feedback and input from our team members and individuals outside of our organization with several disabilities through:

- Companywide survey.
- Focus groups and 1-1 interviews with employees with disabilities so they can share their feedback and ideas.
- Consultations with those who have issues with low vision, hearing loss, physical disability, neurodiversity, mental illnesses and others with invisible disabilities.

We will continue to survey employees, including those with disabilities and any working groups that have been developed as part of this Accessibility Plan, to measure progress and ensure that we realize the changes we've set out to achieve.

DEFINITIONS

Accessibility: Refers to the needs of persons with disabilities being intentionally and thoughtfully considered when products, services and facilities are built or modified so they can be used and enjoyed by persons of all abilities.

Barrier: The Accessible Canada Act defines a barrier as “anything—including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice—that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.”

Disability: The Accessible Canada Act defines a disability as “any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation— whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.