

## NOHFC ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate NOHFC's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all employees, clients, and stakeholders. Accessibility is a core value that supports equal opportunity and participation for people of all abilities.

This policy ensures NOHFC complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) by:

- Identifying and removing barriers that prevent full participation.
- Meeting or exceeding legislative requirements for accessibility in customer service, information and communications, employment, and the design of public spaces.
- Promoting a culture of respect, dignity, and independence for individuals with disabilities.
- Providing clear guidance for staff and partners on how accessibility will be integrated into programs, services, and operations.

By implementing this policy, NOHFC aims to foster an environment where accessibility is not only a legal obligation but a shared responsibility and a fundamental part of how we serve Northern Ontario communities.

## SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to all NOHFC employees, contractors, and anyone acting on behalf of NOHFC.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Accessibility**

The degree to which products, services, and environments are usable by people of all abilities, including those with disabilities.

### **Barrier**

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society. Barriers can be physical, architectural, technological, informational, or attitudinal.

### **Disability**

As defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code, includes physical, mental, developmental,

or learning disabilities, as well as injuries and conditions that affect mobility, vision, hearing, or cognition.

### **AODA**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, which sets standards to make Ontario accessible by 2025.

### **IASR**

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under AODA, which includes requirements for customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and design of public spaces.

### **Alternate Format**

A format that makes information accessible, such as large print, Braille, audio, or electronic text.

### **Assistive Device**

Any device used by a person with a disability to help with daily living or communication, such as wheelchairs, screen readers, or hearing aids.

## **PRINCIPLES**

NOHFC's approach to accessibility is guided by the following principles:

### **Dignity**

Services and interactions will respect the dignity of every individual, ensuring that people with disabilities are treated with consideration and respect.

### **Independence**

People with disabilities will be supported to do things on their own whenever possible, without unnecessary assistance.

### **Integration**

Wherever possible, services will be provided in a way that allows people with disabilities to fully participate alongside others.

### **Equal Opportunity**

People with disabilities will have the same opportunities to access NOHFC's programs, services, and employment as everyone else.

### **Responsiveness**

NOHFC will respond promptly to accessibility requests and feedback, ensuring continuous improvement.

### **Compliance and Beyond**

NOHFC will meet all legal requirements under AODA and strive to go beyond compliance by fostering an inclusive culture.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

To successfully implement and maintain accessibility across NOHFC, everyone in the organization has a role to play. Clear responsibilities ensure accountability and NOHFC meet its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The following outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups within NOHFC to support an inclusive and barrier-free environment.

### **Board of Directors**

- Provide oversight and ensure NOHFC meets its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- Approve the Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

### **Senior Leadership Team**

- Champion accessibility initiatives across the organization.
- Allocate resources to implement accessibility commitments.
- Monitor compliance and report progress to the Board.

### **Accessibility Coordinator (or Designated Contact)**

- Serve as the primary point of contact for accessibility inquiries and feedback.
- Maintain and update the Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Ensure compliance reporting is completed on time.

### **Managers and Supervisors**

- Integrate accessibility practices into daily operations and decision-making.
- Ensure staff receive required AODA training.
- Respond promptly to accommodation requests and accessibility concerns.

### **Employees**

- Complete mandatory accessibility training.
- Follow accessibility practices in service delivery and communications.

- Report barriers or accessibility issues to their manager or the Accessibility Coordinator.

### Contractors and Service Providers

- Comply with NOHFC's accessibility requirements when delivering goods or services.
- Provide services in a manner consistent with AODA standards.

## POLICY STATEMENT AND KEY COMMITMENTS

NOHFC is committed to creating and maintaining an accessible environment that enables full participation for people of all abilities. Accessibility is not only a legal requirement under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) but also a fundamental part of our organizational values and service delivery.

To achieve this, NOHFC will:

- **Integrate Accessibility into Operations:** Embed accessibility considerations into all programs, services, and decision-making processes.
- **Remove and Prevent Barriers:** Identify and address physical, technological, informational, and attitudinal barriers that may limit participation.
- **Provide Accessible Services:** Ensure that all services are delivered in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.
- **Comply with Standards:** Meet or exceed all requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), including:
  - **Customer Service:** Deliver services that accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.
  - **Information and Communications:** Ensure public information is available in accessible formats upon request.
  - **Employment:** Provide equal opportunities and accommodations throughout the employment lifecycle.
  - **Design of Public Spaces:** Ensure any new or redeveloped spaces meet accessibility standards.

- **Engage and Improve:** Seek feedback from employees, clients, and stakeholders to continuously improve accessibility practices.
- **Train and Educate:** Provide mandatory accessibility training to all staff and ensure ongoing awareness of accessibility obligations.
- **Feedback Process:** Maintain a process for receiving and responding to accessibility feedback promptly and effectively.

This policy applies to all NOHFC employees, contractors, and anyone acting on behalf of the organization. It will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed to reflect legislative changes and best practices.

## REPORTING

NOHFC is committed to transparency and accountability in meeting accessibility requirements. Under the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**, designated public sector organizations must file an **Accessibility Compliance Report** with the Government of Ontario every two years.

### Key Reporting Commitments:

- **Compliance Certification:** NOHFC will submit its Accessibility Compliance Report by the required deadlines, confirming adherence to AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).
- **Internal Monitoring:** Progress on accessibility initiatives will be reviewed annually by management to ensure continuous improvement and compliance.
- **Public Availability:** Reports and updates on accessibility progress will be posted on NOHFC's website and made available in accessible formats upon request.
- **Responsibility:** The Accessibility Coordinator (or designated contact) will oversee reporting requirements and ensure timely submission to the Province.

Failure to comply with reporting obligations can result in enforcement actions and penalties; therefore, NOHFC will prioritize timely and accurate reporting as part of its commitment to accessibility.