



Accessible Customer Service Operating Manual

July 9, 2021

(Supersedes all previous Manitoba Possible documents on this topic)

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

Preface

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) was passed on December 5, 2013 to provide a clear, proactive process to identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessibility.

As an organization that values the inclusion of all people, Manitoba Possible is committed to the development and implementation of our accessibility plan which will:

- a) ensure equal access and participation for people of all abilities;
- b) meet the needs of people who face accessibility barriers; and
- c) support people of all abilities by collaborating, promoting innovation and embracing diversity.

This operating manual has been developed to assist in providing Accessible Customer Service to the extent that is reasonably practicable. These practices are in keeping with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and Manitoba Possible policy (3.06.02) on Accessible Customer Service.

Accessible Customer Service is defined as when all persons who are reasonably expected to seek or obtain, use or benefit from a good or service have the same opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from the good or service (Customer Service Standard Regulation, 2015)

Accessibility Coordinator Designated staff member responsible for the coordination of accessibility initiatives, liaises with Executive Team, and provides consultation services to staff about consistent practice and use of resources regarding accessibility.

Barrier is defined as “For a person who has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability, a barrier is anything that interacts with that disability in a way that may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.” (Accessibility for Manitobans Act, Bill 26, 2013)

Examples of barriers:

- a) physical;
- b) architectural;
- c) information or communications;
- d) attitudinal;
- e) technological;
- f) systemic.

Accessible Customer Service follows four basic principles: (Accessibility for Manitobans Act, Bill 26, 2013)

- a) Access - Barrier-free access to places, events and other community functions
- b) Equality - Barrier-free access to things that give equality of opportunity and outcome
- c) Universal Design - Access provided does not create or perpetuate differences based on impairment
- d) System Responsibility - Responsibility to prevent and remove barrier rests with the person or organization creating or perpetuating the barrier.

Operational Procedures

General Practice

Accessible customer service means that organizations and businesses provide products or services in an efficient, fair and respectful manner to people of all abilities. Raised awareness of removing barriers offers new opportunities for people across a range of disabilities. Basic training related to accessible customer service is provided to all new employees at the time of

hire and periodically as required throughout their employment. This training is maintained by Human Resources and delivered by the Accessibility Coordinator or designate.

The Customer Service Standard includes practices in the following areas; communication, assistive devices, support persons, service animals, barrier free access to goods and services, feedback process, notice of temporary disruption, and training. These legal requirements take into account the rights and responsibilities covered by The Human Rights Code (Manitoba). The Code overrides any other law, unless that law specifically says otherwise.

The resource section has valuable additional information and helpful tools related to accessible customer service. Employees should familiarize themselves with resources that are applicable to the responsibilities that they have in their roles.

Communications

Staff will communicate with people disabled by barriers in ways that take into account the nature of the barrier.

Staff will make reasonable efforts to ensure that, when communicating with a person who is disabled by a barrier, the communication is done in a manner that is respectful and takes into account the barrier and that alternative formats are made available upon request. If the barrier is unclear, we will ask the customer what method of communication works best. Paper and pen will be available and used if requested. Electronic devices, such as mobile phones, may also be used.

All written publications that are available to the public will include “This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.” When requested, staff will contact the Accessibility Coordinator who will then provide or arrange to provide accessible formats and communication supports for information needed. This also includes employees who are disabled by barriers and who may need communication supports to perform his or her job and access information that is generally available to other employees. Examples of accessible formats include:

- Translating to American Sign Language (ASL)
- Large print
- Plain language
- Audio files
- Reversing contrast in a document
- Braille
- Electronic files

Assistive Devices

Assistive Devices refers to an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids.

A person who is disabled by a barrier may use assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers, and the measures and practices used will reasonably accommodate the use of the assistive devices.

Staff will be familiar with the various assistive devices available in their program area such as wheelchairs, FM loop systems and push buttons on doors.

Support Persons

Support Persons in relation to a person who is disabled by a barrier, is defined as a person who accompanies the person to

(a) support the person obtaining, using or benefiting from a good or service provided by an organization; or

(b) assist the person in addressing his or her communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs. (Customer Service Standard Regulation, 2015)

A person disabled by a barrier is welcome to be accompanied by a support person. Staff will address the customer, unless requested to do otherwise.

Whenever possible we will make every effort to waive the fee for the support person. If there is an extra charge for a support person, will notify customers in advance of any additional fees that will be charged for the accompanying support person.

Service Animals

Service Animal is defined in the Human Rights Code (Manitoba) as an “animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person’s disability”. A service animal can often be identified through visual indicators, such as its harness or vest, or through the assistance it is providing.

Staff will welcome people disabled by barriers and their service animals. Service animals are permitted to be in areas of our premises that are open to the public.

Staff will treat a service animal as a working animal and not distract it from its job by feeding, petting or playing, unless given permission to do so.

When it is not easy to identify that an animal is a service animal staff may ask whether the animal has been trained to provide assistance related to a disability. Staff will not inquire about the disability.

A person with a service animal has a responsibility to keep the animal under their care and control at all times. If the service animal is showing signs of not being controlled, for instance by barking, whining, or wandering, the handler will be asked to control the animal. If that misbehavior continues, staff will then discuss the concern and explain why the animal will not be able to remain on-site. Alternatives for providing goods and services will be discussed.

If service animals are prohibited by another law (such as Workplace Health and Safety), staff will explain why the animal is excluded and discuss with the customer another way of providing goods and services.

Barrier-Free Access to Goods and Services

Barrier-free access will be maintained in meeting spaces and public spaces. This will be achieved by:

- Keeping areas clear of clutter such as boxes in hallways, waiting areas, meeting rooms, accessible bathrooms
- Keeping entrance ways cleared of snow and ice as soon as possible
- Ensuring the placement of free-standing signage is not a tripping hazard
- Having space for mobility devices
- Having seating that will accommodate people of varying size and abilities
- Having accessible parking spaces available where possible or other alternatives provided
- Using both visual and audio cues for building emergencies

Feedback Process

Staff should welcome feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers can provide feedback by meeting with staff, phone, text, fax, mail, or completing the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form (Appendix A) on the Manitoba Possible website.

All customer service feedback will be handled in the following manner:

- Feedback will be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator who will determine what action should occur, if necessary. The Accessibility Coordinator will document and track actions taken to respond to the feedback.
- If the feedback involves a request for follow-up, the customer will be notified that the feedback was received and will be reviewed within 5-7 days. At that time, the customer will be notified what, if any, action will be taken, including a timeline and an explanation. The response will be communicated in a manner that meets the communication requirements of the individual who is inquiring.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of accessible features that create access for persons disabled by barriers, Staff will promptly post notices and, when possible, announce the disruption. This will be applicable to all Manitoba Possible properties, including rural as well as urban.

A clearly posted notice or announcement will include:

- information about the reason for the disruption;
- its anticipated length of time; and

- a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Accessible features include:

- accessible washroom
- elevator/lift
- automatic doors
- ramps
- entrance into a building

The notice will be made publicly available in any of the following ways:

- posted at entrance
- direct contact by staff to customer
- posted on website
- posted on social media
- voice message on main switchboard line

In the event of service disruption, alternative methods of service may be offered such as:

- Videoconferencing, teleconferencing
- Meeting at a public space
- Meeting at customer's residence or place of business

Training – Manitoba Possible Employees and Volunteers

Accessible Customer Service Standard training will be provided to all employees and volunteers. Training includes:

- Background and purpose of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, and Manitoba Possible's intent to be a leader in this area.
- Explanation of all policies relating to the Accessible Customer Service Standard (policy 3.06.02)
- How to interact and communicate with people disabled by barriers including persons who use an assistive device, are accompanied by a support person or are assisted by a service animal
- How to use the equipment or devices available on-site to help people access goods and services or facilities.
- Understand the Duty to Accommodate and the Human Rights Code

Training records including the dates when the training was provided, who attended the training, and the content covered will be maintained by Human Resources.

All levels of current employees and volunteers shall receive training by November 1, 2018. New employees and volunteers shall receive training as soon as practicable after being hired. Training will be provided on an on-going basis, including updates to policies and organizational practices that affect access to goods and services.

Training – Other: Contractors & Other Service Providers

Management, along with Human Resources, will ensure that anyone providing goods, services or facilities to customers on behalf of the organization has completed accessible customer service standard training.

Public Events

Manitoba Possible will make public events accessible by:

- Announcing events in a manner that is accessible
- Holding event(s) in accessible meeting places
- Inviting requests for relevant disability accommodations along with a person to contact and both their email address and phone number for reaching the contact person. Requests will use wording such as "Please notify us two weeks prior to the event date if you require any accessibility accommodations."

Copies of This Policy Available to the Public

Manitoba Possible recognizes that a person disabled by a barrier may use methods other than standard print to access information. Manitoba Possible will provide this policy, or the information contained in the policy, as needed, if requested by a person disabled by a barrier in an alternate format.

Appendix A: Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form



Manitoba Possible Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form

Manitoba Possible is committed to providing high quality customer service. We value all of our customers and strive to meet their needs. We use your feedback to make sure that we can meet reasonable expectations, provide our services to all users and make improvements where necessary. We welcome feedback when:

- We have done something well;
- We have made a mistake;
- We could improve our services;
- You have a suggestion or idea.

Please complete the following feedback form or provide your feedback by email:

accessibility@manitobapossible.ca

phone: 1-866-282-8041 fax: 204-975-3073

mail: 825 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg, MB R3A 1M5

I am a:

- Current Client
- Past Client
- Member of the Public
- Service Provider
- Other _____

1) What would you like to tell us?

2) Did you have any concerns or issues accessing our services?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

3) Were your accessibility needs accommodated?

Yes

No

Comments:

4) What would you like to happen now?

5) Would you like a response to your feedback?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide your contact information:

Name _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Mailing Address _____

I prefer contact by:

Phone

Email

Letter

Other: _____

Thank you for your feedback. If you have requested a response, a staff person will contact with you within 5-7 working days.



Manitoba Possible Accessible Customer Service Workshop Attendance Form (3.06.02-i)

By signing below, I agree that I have been trained on and understand Manitoba Possible policy (3.06.02) and am familiar with the contents of the Accessible Customer Service Operating Manual. I have reviewed the scenarios in which I may be providing customer service to a person disabled by barriers and will use reasonable efforts to ensure that I am providing accessible customer service.

Employee

Name Signature Date

Trainer

Name Signature Date

This Form is to be completed after an employee has been provided with training on Accessible Customer Service. Managers must ensure the original of this signed form is provided to Human Resources department immediately following the training.

Resources

Accessibility Services (braille services, accessible design consultation, etc.):

<http://accessibilitymb.ca/accessibility-services.html>

Clear Print Guidelines from CNIB:

<http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/resources/Clearprint/Documents/CNIB%20Clear%20Print%20Guide.pdf>

Guide to Accessible Festivals & Outdoor Events

<http://www.festivalsandeventsontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Festivals-and-Events-Guide-EN.pdf>

Improving Accessibility in a Microsoft Word Document:

<https://cws.auburn.edu/shared/content/files/2365/Microsoft%20Word%20Accessibility.pdf>

Planning Accessible Events:

https://www.sparkontario.ca/sites/default/files/resource_files/accessible_events_booklet_eng.pdf

Print Communication Checklist: <http://accessibilitymb.ca/tools-resources.html>

Service Animals Fact Sheet – Manitoba Human Rights Commission:

<http://manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/education-resources/resources/policies-pages/policies-i-9.html>

Words with Dignity (using respectful terminology chart):

http://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/words_with_dignity_poster.pdf

More information on the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and additional resources:

www.AccessibilityMB.ca