

Accessibility	<b>Accessibility</b>	Section #	
		Policy #	
		Date	May 2025

### **Organizational Commitment:**

Science North is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and Ontario's accessibility laws.

Science North is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

Science North understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

Science North is committed to excellence in serving and providing goods, services or facilities to all customers, including people with disabilities. Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

## **Objectives &Goals**

This policy sets out the standards that Science North, the Centre's employees, and third-party providers on behalf of Science North will follow to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. These standards apply to the procurement of goods, services, facilities and kiosks, information and communication supports, customer service, employment, and built environments.

## **Changes to Existing Policies:**

Any policies of this organization that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities will be **immediately** modified **and/or** removed.

This document is publicly available. Accessible formats are available upon request.

## **Policy Statement**

Science North will ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Where full integration or access is not possible, Science North will strive to implement alternative measures and/or provide reasonable accommodation that considers individual requirements. The accessibility policy and Science North's accessibility plan will be posted on the Science North website, reviewed and updated annually.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, agents, committee members, placements, contractors, or other third parties who act on behalf of or represent Science North in any manner. Managers are expected to ensure that all standards under this policy are communicated to staff, reviewed periodically, and carried out consistently.

### **1.1 General terms and conditions**

#### **Training**

We are committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

In addition, we will train:

- a) all people who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- b) all other people who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization

Training of our employees and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

Training includes:

- Purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- our policies related to the Customer Service Standards
- how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person

## **1.1 Information and Communication Standards**

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Except as otherwise provided by the AODA, Science North shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication supports shall be provided in a timely manner, taking into account the person's accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons. This does not apply to unconvertible information or communications and information that Science North does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. Individuals may also communicate with Science North via fax, e-mail or written text.

### **Feedback Process**

Science North has a mechanism through which the public can provide feedback on the accessibility of goods and services. Feedback can be made by using a feedback form, by mail, e-mail, telephone or verbally. All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and will be used to improve customer service. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided a response in an appropriate format outlining actions deemed appropriate, if any. Feedback may be provided by a person with a disability in the manner deemed most convenient to them, such as in person, by telephone at 705-522-3701, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email.

Email to: [contactus@sciencenorth.ca](mailto:contactus@sciencenorth.ca), which will be directed to the

Director of Organizational Development. Responses will be received within two business days of the request.

### **Accessible Websites and Web Content**

Internet websites and web content controlled directly by Science North or through a contractual relationship that allows for modification of the product shall conform to the requirements set out in the AODA Integrated

Accessibility Standard.

## **1.2 Procurement of goods, services, facilities and kiosks**

### **Procurement**

When procuring goods, services, self-service kiosks or facilities, Science North shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features, unless it is not feasible in which case, Science North shall provide an explanation, upon request.

## **1.3 Customer Service Standards**

### **Service Animals**

When accessing goods or service, persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in areas/premises that are open to the public or third parties, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. Science North may prohibit the use of service animals in certain locations due to health or safety restrictions including but not limited to food preparation areas programs or areas with animals, and/or other research areas. The partner must be in full control of the animal at all times, including use of a leash as appropriate for the disability and is solely responsible for the care and supervision of a service animal. A service animal may be excluded only when the animal is out of control, when the animal poses a direct and significant threat to the property, health or safety of others or when the presence of the service animal would fundamentally change the nature of the job, program, service or activity. Risks may not be remote or speculative including biting, annoying, allergies or fear of animals and exclusions will be determined on an individual basis based on specific circumstances. In making this determination, consideration will be given as to whether another reasonable accommodation can be provided.

Where it is not readily apparent that the customer uses the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability, Science North may ask whether this is a service animal, request a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability-

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario

- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario
- Or other health professional as may be warranted

### **Support Persons**

When a person with a disability requires a support person to help with communication, mobility, access to goods or services, or help with personal or medical care, the support person will not be charged an admission fee. Where necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability, Science North may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person. This situation would occur under exceptional circumstances when it is the only means through which the person with a disability can access the Centre's goods or services and only after consultation with the person with a disability. Decisions to require support persons will be made where there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others, when the risk is greater than the risk associated with other customers, when the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means, when the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm; and when the assessment of the risk is based on the individual's actual characteristics, not on generalizations, misperceptions, or fears about a disability. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

### **Fees and admission**

Fees are generally not charged for support people for admission to Science North premises or events where a fee is required. If an amount is payable by a support person for admission to the premises or in connection with a support person's presence at the premises Science North shall ensure that notice is given in advance regarding the amount to be paid, by posting notice of fees for support people wherever Science North fees are posted.

### **Service Disruptions**

In the event there is a disruption in a particular facility or service relied upon or used to allow a person with a disability to access goods or services, Science North will give notice of the disruption to the public by posting the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration of the disruption, and

alternative methods of service that may be available.

If Science North or Dynamic Earth must close unexpectedly, we will inform the public using the following channels:

- Website: Alert banner on our homepage
- Social Media: Updates on our official accounts
- Phone Lines: Recorded message with details
- Electronic Billboards: Notices outside the science centres
- E-Newsletter: Sent to subscribers
- Media Advisory: Shared with news outlets

Communication methods may vary based on the expected closure duration.

### **Assistive Devices**

If persons with a disability require assistive devices to access or benefit from Science North's goods or services, they will be allowed to use such devices except where otherwise prohibited by law, including reasons relating to health and safety. In such situations and where such measures are available, Science North may offer persons with a disability alternative measures to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the Centre's goods and services. Where applicable, assistive devices owned and operated by Science North will be available for use by persons with disabilities. These include electronic door openers, elevators and wheelchairs, accessible public washrooms, reserved seating available in some Science North theatres and accessible water fountains. A limited number of wheelchairs are available at the coat check, free of charge and with identification. FM Audio enhancers are available in the IMAX Theatre and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Special wheelchair seating is available in the Science North IMAX Theatre, Science North Planetarium, Epiroc Theatre, and all Object Theatre experiences.

Hearing loop systems are available at our Bell Grove site at the front desk and in the Discovery Theatre. Individuals with t-coil-equipped hearing aids can connect to the loop system to receive audio directly to their hearing aids. These systems were made available in partnership with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Sudbury Branch.

The elevator at our Bell Grove site is equipped with auditory feedback to indicate the current floor and direction of travel.

### **Entrances**

Main entrances to the Science Centres are accessible and equipped with

automatic doors.

### **Parking and Off-loading**

Taxis and other vehicles may use the offloading zone closest to our entrances to drop off and pick-up visitors with disabilities. Science North's parking lots have clearly marked parking spaces reserved for persons with disabilities.

## **1.4 Employment Standards**

### **Accommodation in Employment**

Science North will act in a manner that is consistent with its obligations under the AODA to provide an environment that is inclusive, barrier free and ensures equal opportunity free from discrimination. Reasonable accommodation will be provided on a case by case basis, short of undue hardship, will be based on individual needs and will respect the rights and dignity of individuals in all aspects of employment, including, but not limited to recruitment, selection, training, performance management, professional development opportunities and promotions and movement within the organization. All supervisors and employees involved in the recruiting and selection process will be fully trained on the standards related to AODA employment standards, their duty to accommodate and their roles and responsibilities in that process.

### **Job applicants**

Upon request, job applicants requiring accommodations to access Science North's resume database will be provided with alternate formats or alternate methods for submitting their applications. When contacting job applicants for interviews, Science North's selection process will be fully explained. Job applicants will also be advised of Science North's accommodation policy and will be asked whether accommodation is required at any point in the process in order for them to fully participate in the process. Any request for accommodation will take into consideration the applicant's needs. If a request for accommodation is denied, the reasons why will be clearly communicated to job applicants. Like all other applicants, persons with disabilities must demonstrate they meet the qualifications to perform the essential functions of the position being recruited for. All selection criteria will be objective and based on bona fide job related requirements.

### **Workplace accommodations**

All employees will be notified of Science North's accommodation policy upon hire. Any requests for accommodation including but not limited to the provision of information in alternate formats, will be fully documented. Available accommodation options will be discussed with the employee. Where less costly and/or more efficient options exist, these accommodation options may be selected provided they meet the employee's accommodation needs. Science North will ensure that all accommodation options, short of undue hardship, have been considered prior to refusing accommodation. If a request for accommodation is denied, the reasons will be clearly communicated to the employee. Science North will provide



accommodation during the return to work process, taking into consideration the employee's needs. All accommodation plans and associated processes will be fully documented and periodically reviewed and updated.

### **Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment**

Science North will take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans in its career development, redeployment, and/or performance management processes and ensure all employees have the ability to fully participate in the experiences and opportunities available in the workplace, have the supports required to enable them to meet the requirements of the job or have their requirements considered in deploying to a new job, and, have equal opportunity to move within the organization based on merit and the ability to perform effectively.

### **Workplace Emergency Response**

Science North will periodically review the Centre's emergency response plan to ensure it takes into consideration the needs of persons with disabilities during an emergency along with any existing accommodation arrangements and individual emergency response plans. The Centre will also provide emergency response information to employees in a format and with support (if applicable) considering individual accessibility needs and, based on the employee's consent, to the individual supervisor responsible for helping the employee in an emergency situation.

We will review the individualized workplace emergency response information:

- when the employee moves to a different location in the organization.
- when the employee's overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed; and
- when the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.

We have a written process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

We have a written process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

## **1.5 Built Environment Standards**

### **Construction and redevelopment of public spaces**

Science North will comply with the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards when undertaking new construction and redevelopment of public spaces in the following areas: recreational trails and beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, obtaining services and maintenance of accessible elements.