Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

1. **Purpose**
   This policy is intended to reinforce Gaining Resources Our Way (G.R.O.W.)'s commitment to accessibility and outlines how the organization will meet the requirements of the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Manitoba Regulation 171/2015* under *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act,* and applies to the provision of G.R.O.W. services to participants, families and the public.

2. **Scope**
   This policy applies to the provision of G.R.O.W. services delivered in Winnipeg and in Gimli, Manitoba. It is applicable to all members of the Board of Directors, employees and volunteers of G.R.O.W.

3. **Commitment**
   G.R.O.W. supports the principles of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and is committed to meeting the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

4. **Definitions**
   Accessibility – Related to the Manitoba legislation, accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. Accessibility refers to the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.
   - Assistive Device – a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the Customer Service Standard.
   - Participant – for the purposes of this policy, participant will mean any individual accessing G.R.O.W. for information or services.
   - Disability – A disability is a condition that limits a person's daily activities. Persons with disabilities may have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their participation on an equal basis with others. A disability, aging, injury and other life events may temporarily or permanently affect mobility, dexterity, vision, hearing, communication, understanding or mental health.
   - Service Animal - A service animal is defined in The Human Rights Code to be *"an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability*." While an animal may not have received formal training, if the person relying on the animal can demonstrate that it is an integral part of their disability related treatment program, the animal may be considered a "service animal."
   - Support Person – an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

5. **General Principles**

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Manitoba Regulation # 171/2015,* this policy addresses the following:

a. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities
b. Communication
c. The Use of Assistive Devices
d. The Use of Support Persons
e. The Use of Service Animals
f. Maintenance of Barrier-Free Access
g. Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions
h. Customer Feedback
i. Training

a. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

G.R.O.W. is committed to excellence in serving all constituents and will carry out its functions and responsibilities to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- G.R.O.W. services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- G.R.O.W. will ensure service excellence for young people with social and intellectual disabilities, their families and the public.

b. Communication

G.R.O.W. will communicate with people who experience communication barriers in ways that take into account the nature and complexity of the barrier(s). This may include but not be limited to the following:

- Plain language in its materials, written and electronic;
- Easy to read fonts and point size;
- The offering of alternative communication formats to meet constituent needs;
- Ensuring staff members have capacity to recognize barriers to communication and competencies to work with participants, family members and the public to determine what method of communication works best for them.

c. Use of Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing G.R.O.W. services.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of services. It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure their assistive devise is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

d. Use of Support Persons

G.R.O.W. welcomes persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on G.R.O.W. premises.

e. Use of Service Animals

Service animals shall be permitted entry to G.R.O.W. Service animals are not permitted where food preparation is being undertaken or as otherwise disallowed by law. “No pet” policies do not apply to service animals.

At all times, care and control of the animal is the responsibility of the stakeholder that is accompanied by a service animal.

If a health and safety concern on the part of another G.R.O.W. stakeholder(s) presents itself, for example in the form of a severe allergy to a service animal or a fear of a service animal, G.R.O.W. will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

f. Maintain Barrier-Free Access

G.R.O.W. will maintain barrier-free access by:

- Keeping hallways and rooms clear of clutter such as boxes, footwear, etc.;
- Keep entrances cleared of snow and ice;
- Ensure building access via ramp;
- Ensure that the placement of furniture, signage and other is not a tripping hazard;
- Have space for mobility devices in a designated area.

g. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Service

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control of G.R.O.W. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice.

In some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will include services that are disrupted or unavailable, reason for the disruption, and anticipated duration.

When disruptions occur, G.R.O.W. will provide notice by posting announcements, placing information on the G.R.O.W. website, or by directly contacting current and potential participants and family members with appointments.

h. Customer Feedback Process

G.R.O.W. will receive and respond to feedback in accessible formats, as requested by the stakeholder. This includes providing alternatives to surveys, focus groups or other means by which G.R.O.W. invites input and feedback.

Information on the feedback process will be posted on the G.R.O.W. website, periodically in the G.R.O.W. newsletter or may be directed to the G.R.O.W. Executive Director, by telephone at 204-505-3799, by letter addressed to 91 Willow Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 0G9, or via e-mail at info@growourway.ca.

Should a stakeholder want to submit a formal complaint, the G.R.O.W. Complaints Policy for Members of the Public is posted on the G.R.O.W. website or information on the policy may be acquired by calling the Executive Director at 204-505-3799.

i. Training

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires that training include the rights and responsibilities covered by the Human Rights Code (Manitoba) which overrides any other law unless that law specifically says otherwise.

Relevant training will be provided to all employees and volunteers, and to the Board of Directors which has responsibilities for the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training will include:

i. A review of the background and purpose of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act;*

ii. A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Manitoba Regulation 171/2015;*
iii. A review of the Human Rights Code (Manitoba);
iv. Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
v. Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
vi. Instructions on how to use equipment or devices on-site or otherwise provided, to help people access services or facilities. These include instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services or facilities.
vii. Timely advice/information when changes are made to accessible customer service policies.

As part of staff orientation and training, a G.R.O.W. document entitled “Facilitator Tips” will be reviewed with all staff members. To help protect the dignity of adult learners, this document is intended to translate G.R.O.W.’s person-centred philosophy into actionable steps in day-to-day practice. For example, the document contains tips to support facilitators in using person-first language, individualized learning approaches and engaging in reflective practice.

Training will be provided to new employees and volunteers who deal with the public or act on behalf of G.R.O.W. Additional training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

G.R.O.W. maintains a record of training including the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

6. **Administration**
Questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures may be directed to the Executive Director by phone at (204) 505-3799, in writing addressed to 91 Willow Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 0G9, or by email at info@growourway.ca. A copy of this policy can be found on the G.R.O.W. website at http://www.gainingresourcesourway.ca/.

7. Review

This policy and its related procedures are subject to review every two (2) years or as required in the event of legislative changes.

Date Approved	*March 20, 2024*	*Approved By*	*Board of Directors*
Next Date For Review	*March 2026*	*To Be Reviewed By*	*Governance Cttee*