



N.E.E.D.S. Inc. Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

N.E.E.D.S Inc. commits to perpetually revise and update this policy in order to accommodate any individual needs and requirements outlined in the Accessibility for Manitoba Act to allow equal access for everyone.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. is committed to reviewing and updating this Accessibility Plan every three years (and as needed) to meet the requirements of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards, and to support equitable access to our programs, services, and workplaces. We will identify, remove, and prevent barriers to access for clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors, recognizing that accessibility barriers often intersect with racism, language, trauma, and other forms of systemic inequity.

1. Overview of Programs and Services

Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Inc. is a non-profit, charitable organization providing services and supports to immigrant and refugee children, youth, and their families. Established in 1999, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. delivers programs that support successful settlement, integration, and participation in Canadian society.

Our programs are designed to enhance the integration of newcomer children and youth by supporting educational success, employment readiness, social connection, and overall well-being. Services include school-based supports, orientation and settlement programming, employment skills training, after-school academic support, mentorship family engagement activities, and recreational programming. Psychosocial support and wrap-around services are integrated across programs to support participants' mental health, confidence, and long-term success.

In partnership with all school divisions in Winnipeg, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. provides in-school support to newcomer students during their first 12-18 months of settlement, including intake assessments, referrals to community resources, and enhanced educational supports. Additional programming supports newcomer youth in developing social skills, life skills, and labour-market readiness, while engaging parents and guardians in their children's educational journeys.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also provides volunteer and practicum opportunities that support participant engagement while offering mentorship and skill-building opportunities for newcomers. Where required, services may be delivered through home visits, alternative locations, or flexible formats to reduce access barriers.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has the capacity to deliver core services and programs in French when required by clients, including interpretation.

The organization is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for all individuals. We strive to treat all people with dignity and respect their independence, while recognizing that individuals may experience barriers differently. N.E.E.D.S. Inc. works to

identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers across programs and services, and to meet the requirements of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. recognizes that newcomer children, youth, and families may face systemic barriers related to racism, language, and migration experiences, which can affect access to services, education, and opportunities. Programs are delivered using culturally responsive and trauma-informed approaches to support equitable access and participation.

2. Accessibility Achievements

As part of its ongoing commitment to accessibility and inclusion, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has implemented different ways to support equitable access to programs, services, and facilities. These achievements reflect current practices and partnerships that help reduce barriers for clients with diverse needs:

- Wheelchair-accessible washrooms are available on the main floors of the agency's locations at 275 and 228 locations.
- Services are delivered in over 20 languages.
- Psychosocial and emotional well-being supports are available to clients who may be experiencing mental health challenges.
- Transportation supports, including passenger van transportation and bus tickets, are provided to assist clients in accessing programs and services.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. partners with the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) Foundation to support volunteer work placement opportunities for individuals with cognitive disabilities.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. partners with E-Quality Employment Services (REES) to provide additional services for individuals with physical disabilities and/or health conditions.
- The organization maintains a No-Harassment and No-Discrimination Policy that explicitly includes disability as a protected ground.
- The organization is committed to following the Manitoba Human Rights Act, as outlined in the N.E.E.D.S. Inc. policy manual.
- Services can be provided in person, by phone, remotely or virtually, and in print in languages other than English and French.
- When necessary to reduce access barriers, services may be provided through home visits.
- Information and program updates are shared through digital platforms, including the agency website and social media.

- Service animals are welcomed on all N.E.E.D.S. Inc. premises.
- Magnifying glasses are available to support individuals with visual impairments.
- Reception staff have completed certified training in accessible customer service.

3. Barriers to Accessibility

- One of the most significant barriers N.E.E.D.S. Inc. faces is the cost associated with removing barriers that would require major structural changes to leased buildings, such as installing a wheelchair lift or elevator.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. doesn't have wheelchair accessible washroom in the main building.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. does not have a readily available wheelchair-accessible vehicle to transport clients to and from programming.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has limited resources to support visually impaired clients during programming.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. buildings are not equipped with automatic doors or automatic door-operator push buttons.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. does not offer transcription services in Braille.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. does not currently provide Message Relay Services, including teletypewriter (TTY) or Internet Protocol (IP) relay services.
- The N.E.E.D.S. Inc. website is not fully designed to be accessible to individuals with various disabilities (e.g., missing image descriptions, text-resizing features).
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. does not provide on-site parking for visitors or designated accessible parking spaces for staff.
- Some doors and hallways at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. premises are too narrow to accommodate wheelchair access.
- N.E.E.D.S. Inc. does not have smoke detectors equipped with strobe lights.
- Doorbells at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. premises may be out of reach for some individuals, particularly those using wheelchairs.
- Some program materials, forms, or communications may not be available in plain language or alternative formats by default.
- Limited availability of real-time interpretation or communication supports for less common languages or complex interactions may create access barriers.
- Virtual or remote service platforms used by the organization may not be fully accessible to individuals using assistive technologies.

- Some clients may face barriers related to access to devices, reliable internet, or digital literacy, limiting participation in virtual or remote services.
- Registration processes or digital forms may present barriers for individuals with visual, cognitive, or language-related disabilities.
- Fixed program schedules or locations may create access barriers for individuals with mobility, health-related, or caregiving needs.
- Group-based programming may present challenges for individuals who require individualized pacing or additional supports.
- Some program spaces may be overstimulating for individuals with sensory sensitivities.
- Experiences of racism, stigma, or fear of institutions may discourage some individuals from disclosing accessibility needs or requesting accommodations.
- Newcomer status or unfamiliarity with rights and systems may limit some individuals' ability to advocate for their accessibility needs.
- Financial, staffing, and resource limitations may affect the pace at which accessibility improvements can be implemented.

4. Accessibility Plan

Statement of Commitment

Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Inc. is committed to creating and sustaining an inclusive, accessible, and anti-racist organization where all people -clients, staff, volunteers, practicum students, contractors, and community partners - can participate fully and with dignity.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. complies with the requirements of **The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)** and its applicable standards, including the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Information and Communication, and Employment. Our policies, practices, and measures are guided by the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

We recognize that disability may intersect with race, language, culture, gender, age, immigration status, trauma, and socio-economic conditions, and that barriers to access are often systemic rather than individual. Accessibility at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. is therefore approached as an ongoing, proactive process that requires intentional design, accountability, and continuous learning.

Where barriers to accessing programs or services cannot be immediately removed, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. will seek to provide reasonable alternative ways to ensure access. The policy statements, organizational practices, and measures outlined in this Accessibility

Plan describe how the organization works to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to access.

This Accessibility Plan applies to all employees, volunteers, practicum students, contractors, and third-party service providers delivering services on behalf of N.E.E.D.S. Inc.

a) Meet Communication Needs

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. is committed to meeting the communication needs of clients in ways that are respectful, flexible, and responsive.

Practices and Measures

- Services can be provided in **over 20 languages**, and through a variety of communication methods such as verbal communication, written materials, visual supports (pictures and images), and online platforms.
- To support effective communication, staff may:
 - keep paper and pens available to write information down
 - offer seating when longer conversations are needed
 - offer a quieter or less busy space when appropriate
 - sit at eye level when engaging with individuals using wheelchairs
- Signs and documents intended for clients are written in plain language whenever possible.
- Publications and documents can be interpreted or translated upon request.
- Publications and documents can be made available in large print upon request.
- In partnership with organizations that support people with disabilities, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. will make reasonable efforts to accommodate specific communication needs, provided this does not result in undue hardship.
- When clients are invited to N.E.E.D.S. Inc. premises or when public events are hosted off-site, reasonable efforts are made to ensure that identified accessibility and communication needs are addressed in advance.
- Staff may adjust the pace of communication based on individual needs.
- When using virtual or remote platforms, staff make reasonable efforts to use accessible features (e.g., chat functions, visual supports, or follow-up emails).
- Clients may be supported to choose their preferred communication method whenever feasible.

- When complex information is being shared, staff may offer follow-up communication to clarify next steps.
- Staff are encouraged to be mindful of cultural differences in communication styles, including comfort with asking questions or requesting clarification.

b) Accommodate the Use of Assistive Devices

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. accommodates the use of assistive devices when clients are accessing programs, services, or facilities.

Practices and Measures

- Staff do not touch, move, or adjust a client's assistive device without the individual's permission.
- Staff are encouraged to ask individuals how they can best be supported when using assistive devices, rather than making assumptions.
- When N.E.E.D.S. Inc. is unable to accommodate the use of a specific assistive device, reasonable efforts are made to refer the individual to other service providers or partners who may be able to meet their needs.
- Staff recognize that assistive devices may include mobility, communication, sensory, or cognitive supports, and not all assistive devices are visible.
- Staff make reasonable efforts to ensure that furniture, seating, and room layouts do not interfere with the use of assistive devices.
- When service delivery methods or spaces present challenges for assistive device use, staff will work with the individual to identify reasonable alternatives where feasible.
- Temporary disruptions that affect the use of assistive devices (e.g., space changes, room relocations) are communicated as early as possible.

c) Welcome Support Persons

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. welcomes support persons who assist clients, volunteers, and practicum students in accessing programs and services.

Practices and Measures

- Employees should address the individual directly, not the support person, unless the individual requests otherwise.

- Reasonable space is made on-site to accommodate support persons, and individuals are permitted to have their support persons with them at all times.
- When programming takes place at a location that requires an admission fee (e.g., museums, zoos), N.E.E.D.S. Inc. will cover the cost of the support person.
- If N.E.E.D.S. Inc. is unable to cover the cost of a support person, both the individual and the support person are notified in advance.

d) Allow Service Animals

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. allows service animals on its premises in accordance with applicable legislation.

Practices and Measures

- Staff treat service animals as working animals.
- Staff do not distract service animals by petting, feeding, or playing with them unless permission is given by the individual using the service animal.
- Service animals may be identified by their harness, vest, or the assistance they provide.
- If there are concerns, staff may ask whether the animal has been trained to assist with a disability.
- Staff do not ask about the nature of an individual's disability.
- Individuals using service animals are expected to maintain control of the animal through physical means, voice, signals, or other appropriate methods.
- If a service animal is not under control (e.g., persistent barking or wandering), staff may request that the handler take steps to regain control.
- If the behaviour continues, staff may ask the handler to remove the animal.
- If another law restricts access to certain areas (e.g., food preparation areas), staff explain the restriction and work with the individual to identify alternative ways of providing services.

e) Maintain Accessibility Features

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. maintains accessibility features to support barrier-free access to services and facilities.

Practices and Measures

- Where possible, spaces are arranged to allow for the use of wheelchairs, electric scooters, and walkers.
- Hallways, aisles, entrances, reception areas, waiting rooms, and meeting spaces are kept clear of clutter.
- Entrance areas are maintained to reduce hazards, including ice and snow.
- Standing signs are positioned to minimize tripping hazards.
- Both verbal and visual cues are used to notify clients when it is their turn to be served.
- When necessary and appropriate, services may be provided in an alternate space if the primary space is not accessible.
- Accessibility features covered by this policy include hallways, aisles, entrances, reception areas, accessible washrooms, and doorbells.
- Temporary changes to space layout are considered with accessibility in mind.

f) Let the Public Know When and Why an Accessibility Feature Is Unavailable

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. informs the public when an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, explains the reason, indicates how long the disruption is expected to last, and outlines alternative ways to access services.

Practices and Measures

- When an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, a notice is prepared that includes the reason for the disruption, the expected duration, and available alternatives (e.g., alternate entrances or service arrangements).
- Where requested, staff work with individuals to identify alternative ways of providing services during the disruption.
- Notices of service disruptions may be shared through:
 - the organization's website, social media, and newsletters
 - postings at building entrances or reception areas

- communication by employees, volunteers, or management (in person, by phone, or through recorded messages)
- Notices are provided in clear, plain language whenever possible.

g) Welcome and Respond Promptly to Feedback

Policy Statements

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. welcomes and responds promptly to feedback regarding the accessibility of its services. Actions taken in response to feedback are documented and made available upon request in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.

Practices and Measures

- Feedback may be provided in person at reception or service desks, or by phone, email, website, or feedback forms.

e-mail address to submit feedback: info@needsinc.ca
- All accessibility-related feedback is directed to the Administration Department for review and follow-up.
- Where follow-up is required, individuals are informed that their feedback is under review and advised of expected timelines.
- Individuals are informed of any actions taken in response to their feedback, where appropriate.
- Responses are provided in a manner that meets the individual's communication needs.

h) Provide Required Training to Employees, Volunteers, and Management

Policy Statements

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. provides accessibility training to employees, volunteers, and management to support accessible service delivery.

Training includes:

- How to interact and communicate with individuals who face barriers, use assistive devices, are supported by a support person, or use a service animal
- How to use any accessibility-related equipment available on-site
- An overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, The Manitoba Human Rights Code, and the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service
- Organizational accessibility policies, practices, and updates

Practices and Measures

- New employees, volunteers, and management receive accessibility training within one month of starting.
- Training records are maintained by the HR Department.
- Accessibility feedback and learning may be discussed during staff meetings.
- Refresher training may be provided when policies or practices change.

i) Keep a Written Record of Accessibility and Training Policies

Policy Statement

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. maintains written records of its accessibility and training policies, including summaries of training content and timelines.

Practices and Measures

- The public is informed that accessibility policies are available upon request through:
 - the organization's website, social media, or newsletters
 - postings at reception or service areas
 - communication with employees, volunteers, or management
- Policies are provided within a reasonable timeframe, at no cost, and in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.