

Multi-year Accessibility Plan (AODA) – Ontario

Intent

This accessibility plan outlines the strategy of ASTOUND to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and comply with the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Statement of Commitment

ASTOUND is committed to providing an accessible environment for all clients, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and visitors who may enter our premises, access our information, or use our services. As an organization, we respect and comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and its associated regulations. We strive to provide an accessible and welcoming environment for everyone by identifying and removing barriers in our workplace and ensuring that new barriers are not created. The company ensures that persons with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities. We are committed to meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and integrative manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Part I: General

Establishment of Accessibility Policies and Plans

ASTOUND continues to develop, implement, and maintain policies governing how it will achieve accessibility through the requirements under AODA and its associated regulation, the IASR.

ASTOUND continues to review the AODA policy at least every three years or whenever the practices and/or procedures change to ensure it is up to date and all AODA requirements are integrated.



ASTOUND is committed to developing and implementing a multi-year accessibility plan to meet the requirements of AODA. The plan has been developed and is posted to the ASTOUND website. The company updates the accessibility plan at least once every five years.

The company is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner. This is reflected in policies which upon request will be made publicly available in an accessible format.

Training Requirements

ASTOUND will provide training for its employees and volunteers regarding the IASR, AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code as they pertain to individuals with disabilities. Training will also be provided to individuals who are responsible for developing the companies' policies, and all other persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the company.

Training will be provided regularly to new employees and as changes to the companies' accessibility policies occur. ASTOUND will maintain records on the training provided, when it was provided, and the number of employees who were trained.

ASTOUND has taken the following steps to ensure that employees are maintaining their up-to-date training records to meet the AODA, IASR and Ontario Human Rights Code requirements:

- Deployed a process to ensure that AODA, IASR and Human Rights training reminders are set in all employees work calendars.
- AODA training has been added to the On-Boarding/Orientation process.
- Mandatory training continues to be provided and completed by all new employees within one week of their employment.
- Organization-wide training compliance check reports are run as needed.

ASTOUND will implement a refresher training cycle at least every three years or as changes occur in procedure, practices or legislation to ensure knowledge remains current. All employees who have received training will be required to sign off acknowledging that the training has been received in accordance with AODA, IASR and Ontario Human Rights Code.



Part II: Information and Communication Standards

Unless deemed unconvertible, ASTOUND will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request. Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the individual.

ASTOUND will take into account the person's accessibility needs when customizing individual requests and shall consult with the individual making the request to ensure suitability.

ASTOUND will make the availability of accessible formats and communication supports publicly known.

ASTOUND has developed a process and a form that is accessible to people with disabilities for receiving and responding to feedback. Feedback may be shared electronically (by email) at info@astoundgroup.com, in person and verbally, at our offices at 1030 Heritage Road Burlington, Ontario L7L 4X9, CANADA, by telephone at 905-465-0474, by fax at 905-465-2910 or in writing or in any other format necessary that meets the need of the person with a disability.

The company addresses feedback received on a case-by-case basis and takes any actions necessary to remedy any issues. Customers who wish to submit feedback should be directed to the human resources department.

ASTOUND will continue to assess the accessibility of existing website content and consult with persons regarding alternative formats. ASTOUND will establish a plan/familiarize with sources and timeframes for formatting that is not feasible to do in-house. i.e. captioning, video-description and conversion or audio and any other formatting. ASTOUND will continue to use the accessible feedback and request mechanism as a means for enabling people with disabilities to request accessible formats or communication support. ASTOUND will develop processes to ensure information can be made accessible to people with disabilities upon request.

This policy is maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure that it is reflective of ASTOUND's current practices and legislative requirements.

ASTOUND is committed to ensure that our new website (to be launched), and where applicable web content, conforms to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA as outlined in the IASR and will refer to the legislation for specific compliance deadlines and requirements. ASTOUND will conduct web accessibility audits on all existing websites and web content in order to determine if AODA requirements are met and develop remediation plan if content does not conform to the requirements.



Part III: Employment Standards

ASTOUND is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that attract and retain talented employees with disabilities. We recognize that by removing barriers across the employment life cycle will create a workplace that is diverse, accessible and enables employees to reach their full potential.

ASTOUND has reviewed and updated the Human Resources policies and procedures to include the following elements:

Recruitment, Assessment and Selection

ASTOUND is committed to notifying employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for job applicants who have disabilities. Applicants will be informed that these accommodations are available, upon request, for the interview process and for other candidate selection methods. Where accommodation is requested, ASTOUND will consult with the applicant and provide or arrange suitable accommodation.

Successful applicants will be made aware of ASTOUND's policies and support for accommodating people with disabilities. All postings to the careers page include a diversity statement:

At ASTOUND, our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is helping us to create not only a great place to work, but also an environment where our employees, customers, and the communities we operate exist in a safe, productive, and enriching environment for everyone. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, veteran status, and other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees

ASTOUND will ensure that employees are aware of our policies for employees with disabilities and any changes to these policies as they occur.

If an employee with a disability requests it, ASTOUND will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for the following:

- Information needed in order to perform his/her job; and
- Information that is generally available to all employees in the workplace.

ASTOUND will consult with the employee making the request to determine the best way to provide the accessible format or communication support.



Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

ASTOUND is committed to developing and has in place written processes for documenting individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The process for the development of these accommodation plans should include specific elements, including:

- The ways in which the employee can participate in the development of the plan.
- The means by which the employee is assessed on an individual basis.
- The ways that an employer can request an evaluation by an outside medical expert, or other experts (at the employer's expense) to determine if accommodation can be achieved, or how it can be achieved.
- The ways that an employee can request the participation of other representative from the workplace for the creation of the accommodation plan.
- The steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information.
- The frequency with which the individual accommodation plan should be reviewed or updated and how it should be done.
- The way in which the reasons for the denial of an individual accommodation plan will be provided to the employee; and
- The means of providing the accommodation plan in an accessible format, based on the employee's accessibility needs.

We have a workplace accommodation policy in place that includes documented processes and information on accommodating employees with varying abilities.

Workplace Emergency Response Information

Where required, ASTOUND will create individual workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities. This information will take into account the unique challenges created by the individual's disability and the physical nature of the workplace and will be created in consultation with the employee.

This information will be reviewed when:

- The employee moves to a different physical location in the organization.
- The employee's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed; and/or
- ASTOUND reviews general emergency response policies.



ASTOUND is committed to supporting the welfare of its employees and visitors to the premises. The purpose of the ASTOUND Emergency Response Plan is to ensure human safety, minimize damage to property, and assure rapid and responsive communication to all parties involved. This plan has been created to address, in a coordinated and systematic manner, all types of emergencies affecting ASTOUND by the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

The plan establishes processes and procedures for appropriate responses to major emergencies and assign roles and responsibilities for the implementation and execution of the plan in the event of an emergency or catastrophe.

It is critical that all the employees, volunteers, visitors, customers and guests know and understand the Emergency Response Plan, if the information provided is unclear or is in a format that prevents an individual from fully knowing and understanding the process, ASTOUND will work with the individual, as soon as practicable, to identify solutions and options that take into consideration their needs.

Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement

ASTOUND will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when implementing performance management processes, or when offering career development or advancement opportunities.

ASTOUND will review the following information and update all relevant accommodation policies to include the following:

- Policies that support addressing the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as taking into account individual accommodation plans when using performance management processes.
- Policies that support addressing the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as taking into account individual accommodation plans when providing career development and advancement opportunities.

Return to Work and Redeployment

ASTOUND has developed and implemented return to work processes and programs for employees who are absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodation(s) in order to return to work.

ASTOUND will review the policies that support addressing the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as taking into account individual accommodation plans when redeploying employees with disabilities.

The return to work process outlines the steps ASTOUND takes to facilitate the employee's return to work and uses documented individual accommodations plans.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is reflective of ASTOUND's current practices as well as legislative requirements.



Part IV: Customer Service Standards

ASTOUND uses reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- Services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of services to persons with disabilities, and others, is integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis.
- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- Persons with disabilities and their service animals are accommodated in all aspects of service provision unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
- ASTOUND employees, when communicating with a person with a disability, will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The following measures have been implemented by ASTOUND:

- Senior HR Representative has been designated to present and/or revise as required practices and procedures.
- Notice will be provided on the website, over the phone, or in writing where applicable, when a Service Disruption occurs and will be done as quickly as possible if the disruption is unexpected.
- Training on AODA Customer Service has been provided and is given to all employees, volunteers and management.
- AODA training is part of mandatory onboarding for all new hires.
- Completion of training of all employees is tracked and recorded.
- Comments relating to our programs and services with regard to customer service are welcomed and appreciated. A process has been established to encourage feedback regarding the way ASTOUND provides services to people with disabilities. This feedback can be made verbally, by e-mail, by form available on our website or in writing. All feedback is directed to the human resource department.
- A process is in place to ensure that all feedback collected from clients, staff or the general public is reviewed and analyzed to identify potential gaps in customer services, and to ensure appropriate actions are taken.
- Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person or by a service animal will be allowed to ensure ASTOUND'S premises with their support person and service animal. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person or service animal be prevented from having access to his or her support person and/or service animal while on our premises.



Accessibility Review

ASTOUND discusses issues of accessibility and monitors compliance with the requirements of AODA by periodic review of policies and practices at Joint Health and Safety meetings, and policy reviews conducted by ASTOUND's Senior HR Representative.

Contact Details

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

Human Resources Department

Email: info@astoundgroup.com

Phone: 1- 905-465-0474

