

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001



September 30, 2011

Reply to Attn of:

Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity Cert. Mail No.: 7007 2680 0001 2215 8425

Mr. Robert W. Davidson
Chief Executive Officer
Seattle Aquarium
1483 Alaskan Way
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Davidson:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed a compliance review of the Seattle Aquarium (the Aquarium), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. The review was conducted pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and its implementing regulations at 14 C.F.R. Part 1251, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in programs receiving financial assistance through NASA. A copy of the regulations is enclosed.

NASA finds the Aquarium to be in compliance with NASA's Section 504 regulations. This determination is based on an evaluation of data provided by the Aquarium, on-site interviews, an architectural accessibility review, and the Aquarium's expressed commitment to NASA to implement required actions to meet Section 504 regulatory requirements. Specifically, while our review revealed that the Aquarium provides accessible programs, services and facilities, NASA also found a number of compliance concerns. Some of these concerns pertain to Section 504 procedural requirements, such as the need to develop and implement an internal grievance procedure to comport with Section 504 requirements. Others pertain to the Aquarium's program accessibility, particularly architectural accessibility. The enclosed compliance review report provides recommendations and a proposed implementation plan as a means of strengthening existing compliance efforts and addressing specific barriers to program participation observed during the review. A copy of our compliance report is enclosed.

In addition, the report identifies promising practices at the Aquarium for ensuring equal opportunity regardless of disability. For example, the Aquarium provides disability awareness training to its volunteer staff to help the Aquarium staff understand the day to day needs of people with disabilities who visit the Aquarium. The Aquarium also maintains four loaner wheelchairs (and two backup loaner wheelchairs) for use on premises. These are available free of charge from the Aquarium's front desk.

NASA staff will contact the Aquarium in one year to follow up on the Aquarium's progress in implementing NASA Section 504 compliance recommendations. NASA may require the Aquarium to take further action if progress is deemed insufficient.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records on request. If NASA receives such a request, it will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information which, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Mr. Robert Cosgrove, External Programs Manager, Program Planning and Evaluation Division, at 202-358-0446 or robert.cosgrove@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda R. Manuel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Brenda R. Manuel
Associate Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:

Mr. Sal Muñoz