

# THE ROYAL CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

## Complaints and Related Procedures Policy

Approved by the Board of Governors on June 27, 2019

### 1. Background

- 1.1. This policy and procedure applies to complaints received by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society ("the Society") about its activities, programs, services, staff or volunteers. The purpose of this policy is to supplement the provisions of the Operating By-law ("the By-law") of the Society. In the event of any conflict between this policy and the By-law, the By-law shall prevail.

### 2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1. It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- 2.2. Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- 2.3. Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- 2.4. Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.
- 2.5. Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.
- 2.6. Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

### 3. Types of Complaints

- 3.1. **Definition:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by the Society as an organization or a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of the Society. Examples include but are not limited to: (a) perceived failure to do something agreed upon; (b) failure to observe policy or procedures; (c) error made by a staff member or volunteer; or (d) unfair or discourteous actions/statements by a staff member or volunteer.
- 3.2. Anyone personally affected can complain and their complaint will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

### 4. Complaint Receipt and Handling

- 4.1. A complaint may be received verbally, in writing or electronically. An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it.
- 4.2. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or has the specific knowledge that is needed to resolve the problem. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that he/she has received it and will act on it.
- 4.3. The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by him/herself or another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

### 5. Resolving the Complaint

- 5.1. Every effort should be made to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within two business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 10 business days.
- 5.2. Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the relevant Vice President. If the Vice President cannot resolve the complaint, it will be escalated to the Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.3. Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved within a month of having been received.

## **6. Documenting the Complaint**

- 6.1. It is necessary to keep a record of any complaint that involves a dispute over money as well as any complaint that cannot be resolved immediately (on the same day it is received). Information about such complaints must be recorded on the complaints tracking worksheet. Information recorded on the worksheet includes a description of the complaint, who handled it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution.
- 6.2. A summary of the complaints received including number and type will be reported to the Board of Governors annually.