SCS CPTP Web Accessibility

This course will help you understand the DOJ rule and PPM 74. You'll also learn practical ways to make sure your web content meets the required accessibility standards.

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UNDERSTANDING WCAG STANDARDS

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☰ **WCAG Principle: Understandable**

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Introduction

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able

- Explain the purpose of the DOJ's web accessibility rule and Louisiana's PPM 74.

- Explain Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.

- Implement accessibility best practices to meet WCAG standards.

What Web Information and Services Must Be Accessible

Text-Based Content

- Website pages (Home, About, Services, etc.)
- PDFs, Word documents, and other downloadable files
- Reports, policies, and manuals
- Blog posts and news articles

Multimedia Content

- Videos (must have captions and transcripts)
- Audio files and podcasts (must have transcripts)
- Live-streamed events (should include real-time captions)

Digital Tools, Online Services, and Forms

- Contact forms
- Application forms (e.g., for permits, jobs, benefits)
- Surveys and feedback forms
- Payment portals & Online portals for members of the public that your agency serves. This includes portals that require a secure login and password for members of the public to access (e.g., tax payments, license renewals, submitting annual reports or continuing education records.)
- E-learning platforms and training modules
- Interactive maps
- Appointment scheduling systems

Social Media and External Platforms

- Embedded social media content
- Posts that contain images, GIFs, and videos (should include alt text and captions)
- Public announcements shared on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn

Navigation and User Interface

- Menus and site navigation
- Search functions
- Buttons and links
- Error messages and alerts

Exceptions to DOJ Rule

Archived Web Content

State and local governments' websites often include a lot of content that is not currently used. This information may be outdated, not needed, or repeated somewhere else. Sometimes, this information is archived on the website.

Web content that meets **all four** of the following points would not need to meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA:

- The content was created before the date the state or local government must comply with this rule, or reproduces paper documents or the contents of other physical media (audiotapes, film negatives, and CD-ROMs for example) that were created before the government must comply with this rule, **AND**
- The content is kept only for reference, research, or recordkeeping, **AND**
- The content is kept in a special area for archived content, **AND**
- The content has not been changed since it was archived.

The exception does not apply unless all four points are present. If any point is missing, the content generally must meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA unless another exception applies.

Preexisting Conventional Electronic Documents

Some state and local governments have a lot of old documents, like PDFs, on their website. It could be difficult to update these documents to meet WCAG standards.

Documents that meet **both** of the following points usually do not need to meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA, except in some situations:
- The documents are word processing, presentation, PDF, or spreadsheet files; **AND**
- They were available on the state or local government's website or mobile app before the date the state or local government must comply with this rule.

When the exception does not apply: Documents that are currently being used to apply for, access, or participate in a state or local government's services, programs, or activities do not fall under the exception even if the documents were posted before the date the government has to comply with the rule.

Example: A PDF version of an application was posted in 2020, but members of the public will still use the application after 4/26/26. The exception would not apply and this document will need to meet the WCAG standards.

Content Posted by a Third Party

**This only applies to content posted by a third party where the third party is not posting due to contractual, licensing, or other arrangements with a public entity.
Third parties sometimes post content on state and local governments' websites or mobile apps. Third parties are members of the public or others who are not controlled by or acting for state or local governments. The agency may not be able to change the content third parties post.

Content that is posted **by third parties** on a state or local government's website or mobile app would not need to meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA.

When the exception does not apply:
1. Third-party content posted **by** the state or local government agency.
2. Content posted by a state or local government's contractor or vendor.
3. Tools and platforms that allow third parties to post content.

Individualized Documents That are Password-Protected

State and local governments sometimes use password-protected websites to share documents that are for specific individuals, like a water bill.

Documents that meet **all three** of the following points do not need to meet the WCAG standards:
- The documents are word processing, presentation, PDF, or spreadsheet files, **AND**
- The documents are about a specific person, property, or account, **AND**
- The documents are password-protected or otherwise secured.

The exception does not apply unless all three points are present. If any point is missing, the content usually must meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA.

Preexisting Social Media Posts
For many state and local governments, making all of their past social media posts accessible may be impossible. There also may be very little use to making these old posts accessible because they were usually intended to provide updates about things happening at the time they were posted in the past.

For these reasons, social media posts made by a state or local government **before** the date the agency must comply with this rule (4/26/26) do not need to meet WCAG 2.2, Level AA.

WCAG Principle: Perceivable

To Make Content Perceivable

- Provide text alternatives for non-text content.

- Provide captions, subtitles and/or transcripts for multimedia.

- Make content easy to see and hear

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Text Alternatives for Non-Text Content

Text alternatives (or alt text) for images, icons, charts and/or diagrams should provide information about the image to the reader – but not just a description; it should provide <u>context</u> to how the image relates to the content.

Who Benefits From Alt Text?
- People who use screen readers.
- People who cannot understand the meaning of the visual content.
- Users without access to high-speed internet who cannot load web images.

Tips For Writing Alt Text
- Focus on the <u>purpose</u> of the image, instead of describing every detail.
- Keep it brief, usually 1-2 sentences.
- End alt text sentences with a period.
- Do not repeat anything that's available in the main text.
- If the image is a link, indicate the link's destination.
- Avoid using computer-generated alt text. It will usually describe the image, but not the purpose.
- If the image is decorative and/or is not relevant to the content, mark it as decorative.

Captions & Other Multimedia Alternatives

Content with audio and/or video must have an alternative. Here are some suggested ways to achieve this:

- Live audio or video? Offer real-time captions.

- Pre-recorded, audio-only content (like podcasts)? Provide a transcript.

- Pre-recorded videos without sound? Provide an audio description.

- Videos with sound?
    - Add captions (must be synchronized to the sound).
    - Provide an audio description to narrate key visual elements.

Using Color

Color should never be used as the *only* means of conveying information - such as indicating an action, prompting a response or distinguishing a visual element. Here are some examples...

Example: Using Color to Convey Important Information

In this example, required fields are shown in red. Some users may not be able to identify the red fields if they have difficulty perceiving color. Additionally, screen readers cannot determine color.

Instead try this...

Using both, the color red and an asterisk, to indicate required fields makes the information accessible to everyone.

Color Contrast

Contrast is the difference in brightness between text and the background.

Level AA establishes a minimum contrast ratio that must be met.

- Normal text - 4.5:1

- Large text - 3:1

Move the slider to see examples of different contrast ratios.

This is sample text.

Contrast Ratio: **1.34**   (**FAIL**)

Move the slider to see examples of different contrast ratios.
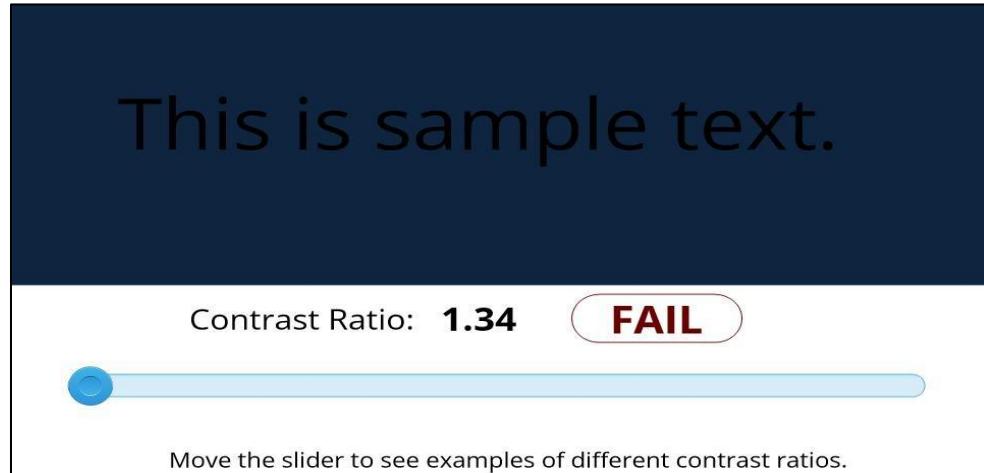
** Webaim.org is a great resource for checking color contrast.

WCAG Principle: Operable
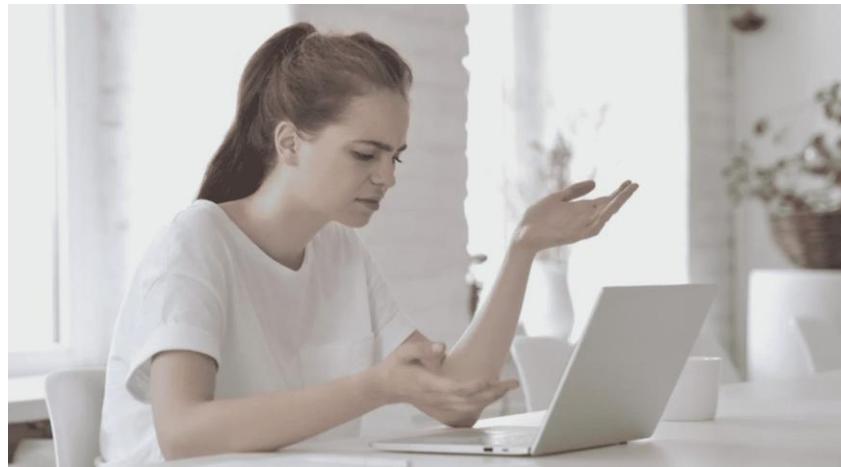
To Make Content Operable...

- Make content keyboard-friendly.

- Give users enough time to read and use content.

- Help users find what they need.

Tips for Navigation

- **Use clear page titles.** Every page should have a title that tells the user what the page is about.

- **Use headings and labels.** Use headings to break up content and label buttons clearly so users know what to expect.

- **Make links descriptive.** Say what the link will actually do. Avoid phrases like "click here" or "read more".

WCAG Principle: Understandable
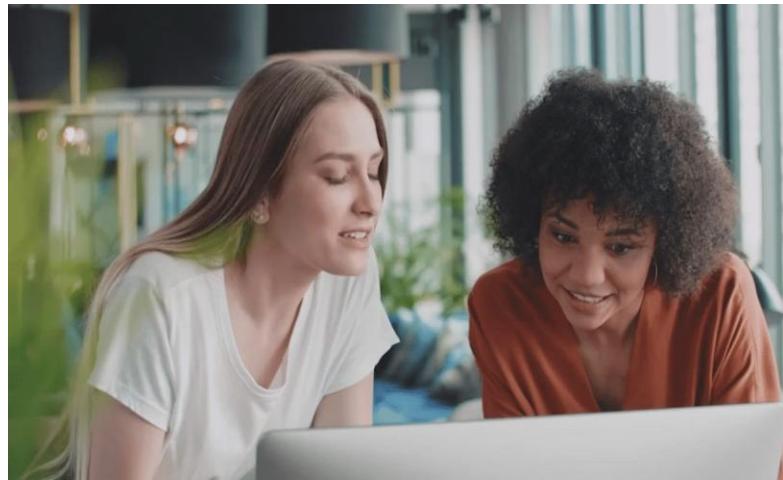
To Make Content Understandable...

- Use clear and simple language.
- Make navigation predictable and consistent.

Making Accessible Forms

Accessible forms are easier for *everyone* to use! Here are a few ways to ensure that your forms meet WCAG standards.

- **Keep forms simple.** Only ask what is needed to complete the process.
- **Clearly label all form fields.** Let users know exactly what is expected
- **Give users time.** Forms should not have a time limit without an option to turn it off or extend it.
- **Make errors easy to identify and fix.** Highlight the field with the issue, tell the user what went wrong and clearly state how to fix it.
- **Select a theme with an accessible level of color contrast.**

WCAG Principle: Robust
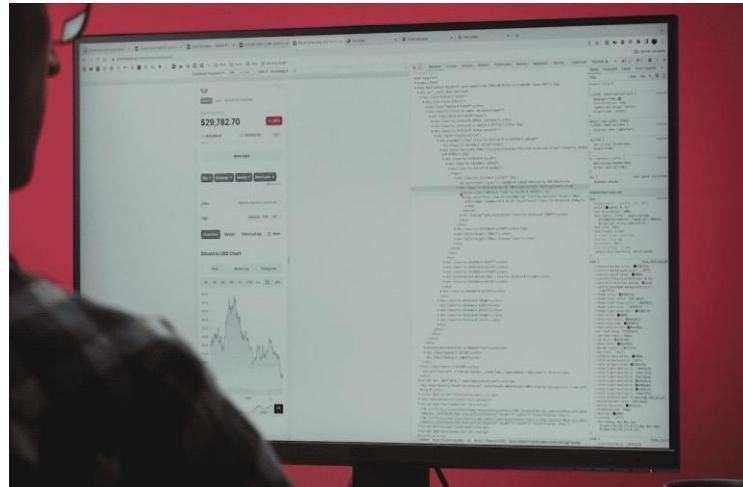
How Do I Ensure My Content is Robust?

1 Regularly review and update content to ensure ongoing accessibility.

2 Be sure to follow WCAG standards when adding content.

3 Take time to test your content using the following methods:

- Screen reader software

- Check keyboard navigation

- Test across multiple browsers

- Test across multiple devices

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Resources

The Office of Technology Services (OTS) offers resources that are invaluable for anyone involved in developing or maintaining digital services within Louisiana's state agencies.

OTS – Pelican Design System

Pelican is a toolkit that helps state agencies build websites that are accessible, user- friendly, and consistent. As a content creator, be sure to review the "accessibility" section! There's even an accessibility checklist that covers all WCAG, Level A and AA criteria.

OTS Guide to Accessible Web Services

This comprehensive guide was designed to assist state agencies in creating inclusive and accessible digital services. The guide includes a list of "how-to" guides on various types of web content including images, links and downloadable documents. Unsure of how accessibility fits into your job? Check out the "Learn Your Role" section for role-specific information on your impact and how you can grow your skills.

W3C - Digital Accessibility Foundations Online Course

W3C, creator of WCAG, offers a free, online course for technical and non-technical learners who wish to start their journey in accessibility of digital content. The course is self-paced and takes 16-20 hours to complete.

Digital Accessibility Education, Training, & Certification

W3C provides a list of training programs on digital accessibility from various providers.

Minnesota IT Services - Office of Accessibility

offers a variety of resources to help better understand accessibility, create accessible content, and more!

Conclusion

Web accessibility isn't just a checklist—it's about making sure everyone can access the services and information they need, no matter their abilities. By following PPM 74 and WCAG 2.2 Level AA guidelines, you're helping create a more inclusive digital space for everyone.

Remember:

- Make your content **perceivable**—so everyone can see or hear it.

- Keep it **operable**—so everyone can use it, regardless of how they navigate.

- Ensure it's **understandable**—so everyone can make sense of it.

- And keep it **robust**—so it works across a variety of tools and technologies.

No matter your job title, we all play a role in creating an accessible experience for the people we serve. Little things—like adding alt text to images, providing captions for a video or writing clear link text—can go a long way.

Accessibility is an ongoing process, but you've got the tools and knowledge to start strong. Keep learning!