



# DES IT Accessibility Plan

Ensuring Inclusive and Accessible Technology

## Introduction

An Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Plan is required by [Washington State Digital Accessibility Policy USER-01](#) and ensures everyone, including people with disabilities, can use our technology and digital resources. It outlines how the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) will make sure all new and existing technologies are accessible.

## Goals and Objectives

### Main Goals

- Follow accessibility laws and standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Make digital resources easy to use for everyone.

### Specific Objectives

- Regularly check all technology platforms and services for accessibility.
- Train IT staff on best practices for accessibility.
- Provide training and resources for agency staff to create accessible documents and content.
- Use accessible design principles when developing and buying digital tools and resources.
- Create a way for users to report accessibility issues and suggest improvements.

## Accessible Design and Development

### **New Application Development/Enhancement Process:**

The Enterprise Technology Solutions Division (ETS) will create new applications and improve existing ones using accessible design principles. This includes making sure they work with screen readers, have accessible styling, provide alternative text for images, and use clear and simple language.

- A UX Design & Digital Accessibility Analyst will work on new development and major enhancement projects to create user-friendly and accessible designs.
- The Analyst will test the software for accessibility before it goes live, using tools like JAWS screen readers and browser-based tools. They will follow WCAG guidelines and work with developers to fix any issues.
- The Analyst will include individuals with disabilities, where applicable, to ensure that digital resources meet their needs. This test will involve real-world scenarios to evaluate the usability and accessibility of digital platforms, websites, and applications.



### **Legacy Applications Process:**

The ETS UX Design & Digital Accessibility team is in the process of testing our legacy applications with the intended goal to complete by end of April 2026. They will work with the ETS Application Development team and DES programs to test the accessibility of existing applications. This includes custom-built and vendor applications (SaaS and COTS).

A list of prioritized applications that do not meet current accessibility requirements and remediation plans will be posted sometime after April 2026.

- Testing will focus on applications that have not been previously tested for accessibility, starting with public applications, then high usage applications, and finally low usage applications.
- The ETS Analyst will help staff with advanced technical issues regarding accessibility for items like Microsoft Office documents.

### **Content and Social Media Process:**

Communications ensures that the HTML content on public websites and social media are accessible. Communications requires that submissions for inclusion on any DES website have been checked for accessibility by the division responsible for the content.

## [Procurement Policies](#)

Accessibility considerations will be integrated into the procurement process for new software and digital tools. This ensures that all procured technology meets the necessary accessibility standards and provides an inclusive experience for all users.

### **Vendor Requirements:**

- Vendors must provide a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) or evidence of successful independent 3rd party testing to WCAG standards before procurement.
- Vendors must show that their products meet accessibility standards like WCAG and ADA, including providing detailed documentation and evidence of compliance.

### **Standardized Accessibility Compliance Language:**

- Accessibility requirements and contracts will include standardized language and refer to WaTech accessibility policies to ensure everyone understands their expectations and obligations.



### **Accessibility Evaluations:**

- A UX Design & Digital Accessibility Analyst will be assigned as an accessibility evaluator during solicitations. This role involves assessing the accessibility of proposed technological solutions and ensuring they meet the required standards.
- The Analyst will conduct accessibility testing before the software is deployed to production. They will utilize JAWS (Job Access With Speech) screen readers and other browser-based tools for this purpose. Testing will be performed in accordance with the current WCAG guidelines, and any areas of non-compliance will be documented along with recommendations for remediation. The analyst will collaborate closely with the vendor to implement the recommended changes, ensuring that the solution is accessible to all users, or an alternative method is established.

### **Continuous Monitoring & Vendor Collaboration:**

- The procurement process will include continuous monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance with accessibility standards. This involves regular reviews and updates to the procurement process and practices to reflect changes in technology and legal requirements.
- Collaboration with vendors will be encouraged to promote development of accessible products. This includes providing feedback and support to help vendors improve the accessibility of their offerings.

## User Feedback and Testing

### **Feedback Mechanism:**

- Users can report accessibility issues and suggest improvements by emailing [accessibility@des.wa.gov](mailto:accessibility@des.wa.gov).
- The Digital Accessibility Coordinator will review and route the issue to the appropriate division for review and remediation.

### **Continuous Improvement:**

- Feedback from users and stakeholders will be used to drive continuous improvement efforts. Regular reviews of feedback and testing results will help identify new areas for enhancement.

## Implementation Strategies

### Accessibility Audits

Annual audits will be conducted to evaluate the accessibility of existing digital platforms, websites, and applications. The audit team will work with the divisions to fix any issues and ensure ongoing compliance with accessibility standards.



## ETS Applications:

### **Audit Process:**

- The audit process will involve a comprehensive review of DES applications, to ensure they meet WCAG accessibility standards.
- Automated tools and manual testing will be used to identify accessibility issues. Automated tools can quickly scan for common issues, while manual testing ensures that the user experience is accessible for individuals with disabilities.

### **Audit Team:**

- The audit team will consist of IT staff trained in accessibility standards and best practices, as well as (where practical) individuals with disabilities who can provide insights into the user experience.
- A UX Design & Digital Accessibility Analyst from the ETS PMO team will be assigned to IT projects to perform accessibility testing before the application is live in production.

### **Reporting & Remediation:**

- Detailed reports will be generated after each audit, highlighting areas of non-compliance and providing specific recommendations for remediation.
- The audit team will work closely with the developers to implement the recommended changes and ensure the digital resources are accessible to all users.

### **Continuous Improvement:**

- Accessibility audits will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure ongoing compliance with accessibility standards and to identify new areas for improvement.
- Feedback from users and stakeholders will be used to drive continuous improvement efforts and to ensure that the IT Accessibility Plan remains effective and up to date.

## Websites, Social Media, Visual, Email, Surveys, etc.:

- Websites are built and managed for accessibility. New developments, such as a feature or design or content type, are reviewed by an accessibility expert. All websites are routinely audited for accessibility using Siteimprove analytics software. HTML content follows WCAG best practices, such as alt text, color contrast, and descriptive hyperlinks.
- Social media content utilizes all possible accessibility features that the native channel offers, although this can vary depending on the channel. Alternative text for images is always included. The social media management tool includes accessibility features, as well.
- Visual content such as maps and photos usually supplement text. They are described as best as possible. If the visual is decorative only, include the alt attribute, but leave its value empty.
- Emails sent to subscribers (alerts, outreach, promotions, etc.) using the GovDelivery platform are accessible in HTML and text-only. Templates are designed for accessibility using



the tool's built-in template builder, with focus on color contrast, font size, buttons, hypertext, and alt text.

- Surveys are designed to be accessible to people with a diverse range of hearing, movement, sight, and cognitive ability using the full features of the survey tool. Response mechanisms that are not accessible are not used (e.g. drag-and-drop ranking, sliders).

## Training and Education

### IT Staff Training:

- Training will be provided to ensure IT staff and agency staff are knowledgeable about accessibility standards and the best practices. Training will cover topics like accessible design, assistive technologies, and inclusive content creation.

### Resource Library:

- [Agency-wide training resources](#) along with policies and guidance are available on Inside DES to internal agency staff.
- An internal resource library has been created to provide IT staff with easy access to IT accessibility guidelines, best practices, and training materials

## Exclusions and Equivalent Access

### Exclusions:

The following items are excluded from the scope of this IT Accessibility Plan:

- **Legacy Systems:** Systems that are no longer supported or maintained by the IT department and/or are scheduled for decommissioning within the next 12 months.
- **Archived Content:** Digital content that is archived and not intended for active use or interaction by the public or employees.
- **Non-Digital Resources:** Physical resources and materials that are not part of the digital infrastructure and do not fall under the purview of IT accessibility standards.

### Equivalent Access:

If following standards create an excessive burden or significantly changes the nature of the technology, or if the technology is not available commercially, the agency will ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the information and data through alternative methods.

## Conclusion

The IT Accessibility Plan is essential for creating an inclusive and equitable digital environment for all users. By following this plan, we aim to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to technology and digital resources, enhancing their ability to participate fully in our community.