

Achieving Accessibility

While addressing accessibility may appear to be a daunting task, it can be both manageable and productive when approached appropriately. While every organization has unique goals, resources, and requirements, the following basic steps have proven to be effective:

- 1. Understand the Requirements** – It is easy to misunderstand the legal and technical requirements of accessibility. Begin your process by having an accessibility professional provide an overview of accessibility laws, standards, and techniques so that your team starts off with an accurate and consistent understanding of what is really required.
- 2. Assess your Situation** – It is essential to fully understand your starting point. An accessibility audit of your key sites and systems will identify what needs to be done and help estimate the amount of work and resources that may be required.
- 3. Set Priorities** – Based on your accessibility audit, prioritize based on which pages/sites/systems are most important to your users and which issues can be most quickly and easily addressed. Classify priorities as “low hanging fruit,” important but longer-term, and those that you will get to as time permits.
- 4. Find Resources / Train Staff** – Identify which tasks can be done in-house and which can be outsourced. Find qualified resources to train your staff and provide technical assistance, mentoring, and quality assurance. Consider outsourcing time intensive tasks, such as PDF remediation and closed captioning.
- 5. Test** – Plan to test accessibility during prototyping, development, and user acceptance. Consider using an accessibility professional for independent verification and validation.
- 6. Enhance Accessibility with BrowseAloud** – Once you have an accessible site, consider enhancing accessibility for users with learning disabilities and low literacy by enabling your site with the BrowseAloud reading tool.

Keys to Success

- **Be proactive** – The earlier you start addressing accessibility the less expensive it will be.
- **Take one step at a time** – Most people with disabilities and advocacy groups are looking for progress not perfection; focus on your top priorities, one goal at a time.

More Information

The members of MSF&W's Accessibility Team have been helping businesses, government, and educational organizations to successfully address accessibility for almost 15 years. For more information about how we can help, please call (217) 698-3535 or email accessibility@msfw.com.