SOUTH DAKOTA'S GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY 101
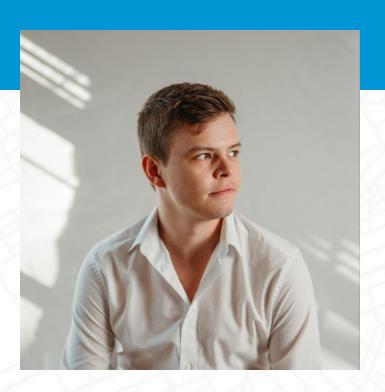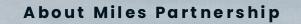
JANUARY 2025

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With You Today:

August Erickson | CPACC
*Development Manager
at Miles Partnership*

Miles Partnership is a strategic marketing consultancy focused **exclusively** on travel and tourism.

Today

What is Digital Accessibility?

The process of ensuring digital products (primarily websites) are accessible to those with disabilities.

At a very high-level this entails continuous analysis of digital products, to remove any digital barriers detected.

Important Acronyms:

a11y » Accessibility

ADA » Americans with Disabilities Act

WCAG » Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

W3C » World Wide Web Consortium

What Are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?

- Internationally recognized **guidelines**, published and maintained by W3C, a non-profit organization formed to establish standards for the World Wide Web.

- WCAG outlines specific success criteria which are designed to remove digital barriers for individuals with disabilities, and ensure digital content can be analyzed by **assistive technologies**.

- In short, they're the **'Gold Standard'** of digital accessibility.

What Are Assistive Technologies?

- Any technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

- Some examples include:
  - Screen readers
  - Screen magnifiers
  - Speech input devices

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Versions

- The current version of WCAG is **2.2** – which was finalized by W3C on October 5th 2023.

- Each version of WCAG is built "on top" or previous versions.

- As an example, WCAG **2.2** introduced 9 NEW success criteria, which were not outlined in WCAG **2.1**

The 4 Principles of Digital Accessibility

Perceivable
The content must be available to users via sight, hearing, and/or touch.

Understandable
The content must be readable and predictable, with clear labels and instructions.

P O U R

Operable
The product must be keyboard-accessible, navigable, and compatible with different input methods.

Robust
The product must work with a variety of assistive technologies, browsers, and devices.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Conformance Levels

- **Level A** is the minimum level of conformance.

- **Level AA** includes all Level A and AA success criteria and is the most widely used conformance level.

- **Level AAA** is the highest possible level and includes all Level A, AA, and AAA success criteria.
  - It is **not** recommended that Level AAA conformance be required as a general policy, as it is not possible to satisfy all Level AAA success criteria for some content.

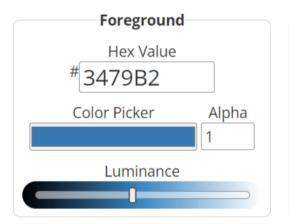# § Success Criterion 1.4.3 Contrast (Minimum)

(Level AA)

The visual presentation of text and images of text has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1, except for the following:

Large Text
Large-scale text and images of large-scale text have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1;
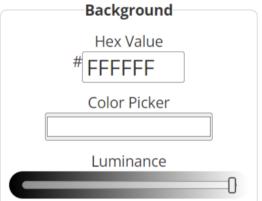
Understanding Contrast (Minimum)

How to Meet Contrast (Minimum)

Foreground

Hex Value

3479B2

Color Picker | Alpha

1

Luminance

Background

Hex Value

FFFFFF

Color Picker

Luminance

Contrast Ratio

4.64:1

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Who We Are

a.menu-item.unstyle   98.03 × 31.8
Color   ■ #021521
Font   17.674px "Red Hat Display", sans-serif
Padding   3.53481px 0px 0px

ACCESSIBILITY

Contrast   Aa 18.55 ✅
Name   Who We Are
Role   link
Keyboard-focusable   ✅

Advertising Opportunities

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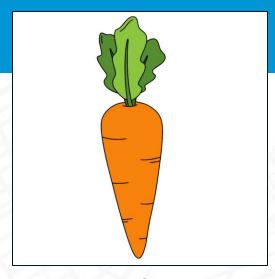
Privacy Policy   Accessibility Statement

LinkedIn   Instagram   Facebook

Miles Partnership South Pacific | Odyssey Studios | Ad+genuity | Tourism Exchange USA | Coraggio Group | Black Diamond | Wayfinder
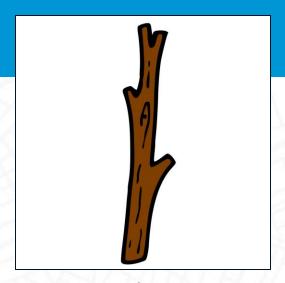
The Carrot & The Stick

Rewards / Benefits

Punishment / Ramifications

The

Carrot

Digital accessibility **is the right thing to do**

- It's altruistic – EVERYONE should be able to utilize the internet with minimal barriers.

- Efforts help ensure your digital products can be utilized by individuals of all ages and abilities.

The

Carrot

Digital accessibility **increases your potential customer / visitor base**

- 1 in 4 adults in the Untied States have some type of disability (*CDC 2024*)

- Travelers with disabilities take an average of 3.3 leisure trips per year (*State of the American Traveler 2023*)

- Travelers with disabilities are more likely to utilize online resources for trip planning than all other travelers (*State of the American Traveler 2023*)

Digital accessibility **has substantial SEO benefits**

- Example: Alternative (alt) text for images
  - Allows search engines to properly index images

» **Alt text:** Man laughs with friends while working on his laptop at a coffee shop.

The

Carrot

Digital accessibility **has substantial SEO benefits**

- Example: Nested heading structure
    - Allows search engines to accurately crawl web pages

The

Carrot

Let's Talk About

The Curb-Cut Effect

The Curb-Cut Effect

By prioritizing digital accessibility, you're creating a better user experience for ALL

The

Carrot

Example of the **curb-cut effect** in web development

- Prime example with websites is color contrast requirements.
  - Designed to benefit those who are color blind and/or have low vision

- Color contrast requirements also benefit:
  - Users with low quality monitors
  - Users relying on devices with smaller screen sizes
  - Older users with deteriorating eyesight

THE CARROT OF DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY FOCUSES ON THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE MISSION

Personas allow us to view digital accessibility through a **'human' lens**

- W3C outlines 9 separate personas, tied to the WCAG success criteria.

- These personas highlight the effect of accessibility barriers and the broader benefits of accessible websites.

> **"**
>
> *Accessibility: It's about people"*

Elias is an 85-year-old retired architect. Over the years, Elias has experienced a decrease in vision, hearing, and short-term memory and he has a slight hand tremor. Using technology can be difficult when he can't use the adjustments he needs, like when sites and apps don't allow increased text size, require clicking small areas of the page, and video content does not have captions.

This video is available with more accessibility features.

Page Contents

- [About Elias](#)
- [Barrier examples](#)
- [Assistive technologies and adaptive strategies used](#)
- [Related WAI resources](#)
- [Related principles](#)
- [Video: Elias, retiree with low vision, hand tremor, and mild short-term memory loss](#)

The

Stick

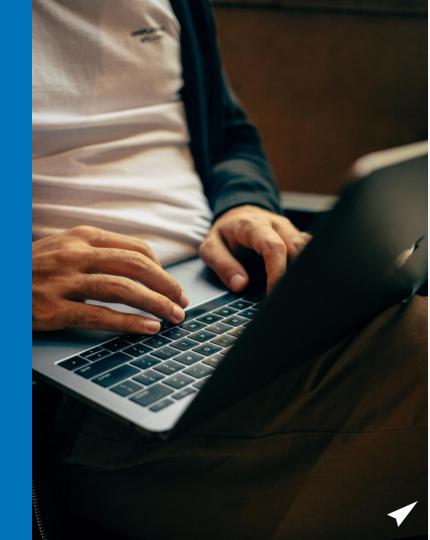Digital accessibility is a **legal requirement** (under the ADA)

- Prioritizing digital accessibility reduces your legal risk.

- You reduce your legal risk by conforming to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) - with the goal of preventing lawsuits and financial penalties.

The Legal History of Digital Accessibility:

» **1990:** The ADA is signed into law by George H.W. Bush

» **1991:** The first website goes live on the world wide web

» **1994:** The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is founded

» **1996:** The DOJ takes the "position" that the ADA applies to web content - without providing guidelines of what makes a website accessible

The Legal History of Digital Accessibility:

» **1999:** The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 1.0) is introduced by W3C

» **2008:** WCAG 2.0 is introduced by W3C

» **2017:** Lawsuits against websites begin to rise (Winn-Dixie lawsuit)

» **2018:** WCAG 2.1 is introduced by W3C

» **2023:** WCAG 2.2 is introduced by W3C

The Legal Landscape of Digital Accessibility

- WCAG are guidelines, **not formal law**. However, WCAG is cited on the ADA website.

- WCAG is referenced in both existing federal and state legislation.
  - Section 508 (federal) references WCAG 2.0 AA
  - California and Colorado's state legislation references WCAG 2.1 AA

THE STICK OF DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY FOCUSES ON LEGAL & FINANCIAL REPERCUSSIONS

Digital Accessibility Lawsuits in 2024 (United States)

- **97%** of the digital accessibility lawsuits filed were against desktop websites.
  - Mobile websites only accounted for **3%**

- **Over 40%** of the lawsuits filed at the federal level were against businesses / organizations with previous lawsuits.

- **25%** of the lawsuits filed were against websites using an accessibility widget
  - Many of these lawsuits reference the widgets themselves as the barrier.

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The ICEE Comp

Accessibility Menu (CTRL+U) ✕

US   English (USA) ▸

Accessibility Profiles ▸

XL   Oversized Widget

Screen Reader

Contrast +

Smart Contrast

Highlight Links

Bigger Text

Text Spacing

Pause Animations

Hide Images
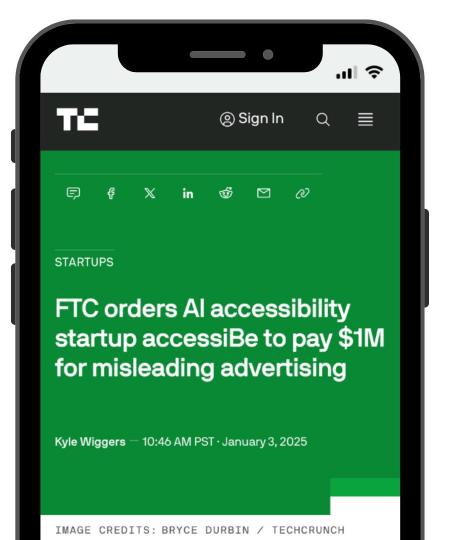
Df Dyslexia Friendly

Report a Problem

Manage

USERWAY
a Level Access company

STARTUPS

FTC orders AI accessibility startup accessiBe to pay $1M for misleading advertising

Kyle Wiggers — 10:46 AM PST · January 3, 2025

IMAGE CREDITS: BRYCE DURBIN / TECHCRUNCH

TECH STARTUPS

Userway faces class action lawsuit over alleged false accessibility and ADA compliance claims
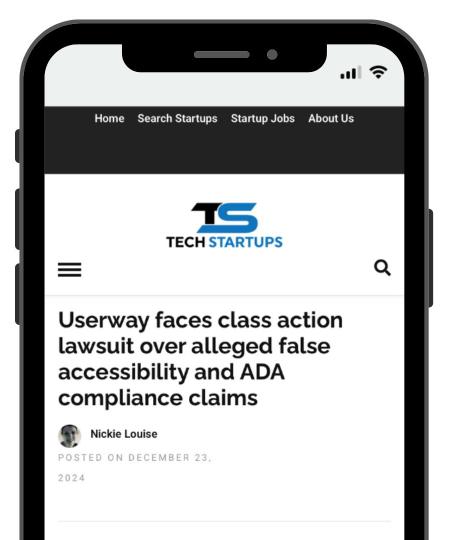
Nickie Louise

POSTED ON DECEMBER 23, 2024

How to

Remediate Content

Work with your web provider, internal digital team, and/or a 3rd party provider:

- Analyze your website to detect accessibility issues (WCAG 2.2 AA violations).

- Then conduct prioritized remediations to resolve these issues.

Through a combination of automated scans and manual user testing

- **PHASE #1:** Automated scans look for code / structure-based issues based on the WCAG 2.2 AA success criteria.

- **PHASE #2:** Manual user testing consists of testing your website relying on keyboard navigation and/or assistive technologies.

How to Analyze

Your Website

Potential providers for automated scans:

deque

UsableNet

Siteimprove

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Siteimprove Accessibility Checker

Issues   Explorer

← Issues overview

A   1.1.1 Non-text Content

Image missing a text alternative

All non-decorative images must have a text alternative (also known as "alt text").

Why is this an issue   ⌄

Occurrences of this issue 1

🖼 https://www.travelandleis...948ca9b24802 594131974.jpg   ⌃

→ Add a text alternative for the image.

Image

NEWS

American Airlines Is Cutting These 5 U.S. Routes From Austin Airport
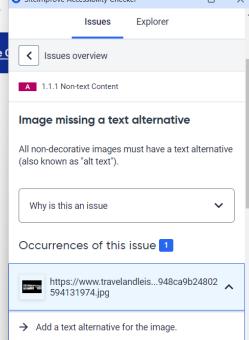
By Michael Cappetta

NEWS

United Just Made a Big Change to Its Basic Economy Tickets

By Alison Fox

ted This Idyllic
nfront Mexican
to Learn What
ad's 'Year of the
rt' Was All About

Kachroo-Levine

How to Prioritize

**A11y
Efforts**

When conducting remediations, ensure you're following a prioritized approach

- **Priority #1:** Component based remediations

- **Priority #2:** Homepage remediations

- **Priority #3:** Template based remediations

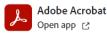- **Priority #4:** Individual remediations

Accessible

PDFs

Digital accessibility extends beyond websites

- **Avoid** PDF documents (such as menus) on your website.
    - Substantial accessibility concerns
    - Lack of SEO benefits

- If you **must** use PDFs, test for accessibility with Adobe Acrobat.

3 Select **Initial View** and then from the **Show** drop-down, select **Document Title**.

4 Select **OK**.

> 📝 **Note:** See the related WCAG section: 2.4 Page Titled (Level A)

BOOKMARKS

This check fails when the document has 21 or more pages, but doesn't have bookmarks that parallel the document structure.

To add bookmarks to the document, select **Bookmarks** on the **Accessibility Checker** panel, and choose **Fix** from the **Options** ▦ menu. In the **Structure Elements** dialog box, select the elements that you want to use as bookmarks, and click **OK**. (You can also access the **Structure Elements** dialog box by clicking the **Options** menu on the **Bookmark** tab and selecting the New Bookmarks From Structure command.)

> 📝 **Note:** See the related WCAG sections: 2.4.1 Bypass Blocks (Level A), 2.4.5 Multiple Ways (Level AA)

COLOR CONTRAST

When this check fails, it's possible that the document contains content that isn't accessible to people who are color-

Let's Review

Actionable First Steps

Actionable

First
Step

Create and publish an accessibility statement on your website

- Conveys your organization's **commitment to digital accessibility**

- **Provides contact information** in case users encounter a digital barrier

- Use the W3C **statement generator**

- To be linked in the **footer of your website**

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Who We Are

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How We Think

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Our Commitment to DEI

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Add captions to video-based content used on your website

- YouTube and Vimeo support **automatic captioning** (powered by AI)

- Edit the automatic captions provided to ensure there's **proper punctuation**

Digital Accessibility should be viewed as a process, not a project

- Digital accessibility is an ongoing initiative
  - Modern websites are incredibly dynamic
  - Accessibility guidelines change over time

- It's best to address new accessibility issues as they arise, to **continue** to facilitate the best user experience possible for those with disabilities.

When it comes to digital accessibility, never speak in absolutes

❌ "Fully ADA Compliant"

❌ "Meets WCAG 2.2 AA Conformance"

✅ "In an effort to progress toward satisfying WCAG 2.2 AA conformance"

Let's See

How The Industry is Performing

Analyzed the homepage of the 50 state level DMO websites

- We utilized UsableNet to detect issues on the homepage.

- Reviewing if they're utilizing accessibility widgets.

Our Internal
Analysis

Here are the findings:

- **69%** of homepages had at least one high severity accessibility issue

- **94%** of homepages had at least one issue that would impact visually impaired visitors

- **26%** of the state level DMO websites were utilizing an accessibility widget

How is the industry performing?

- Not well ☹

Travel South Dakota's

Digital Accessibility Efforts

Travel South Dakota's Efforts

Holistic Approach: Content + Website Optimization
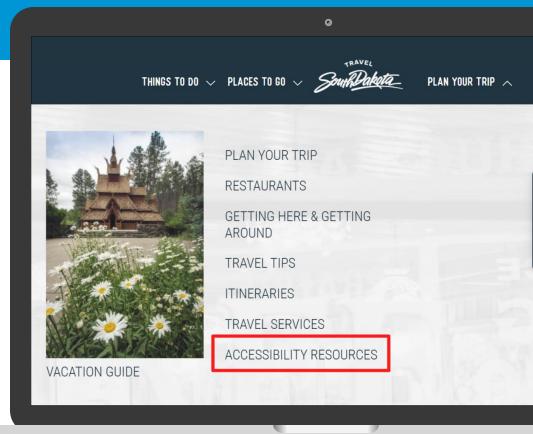
Travel South Dakota

Custom Content

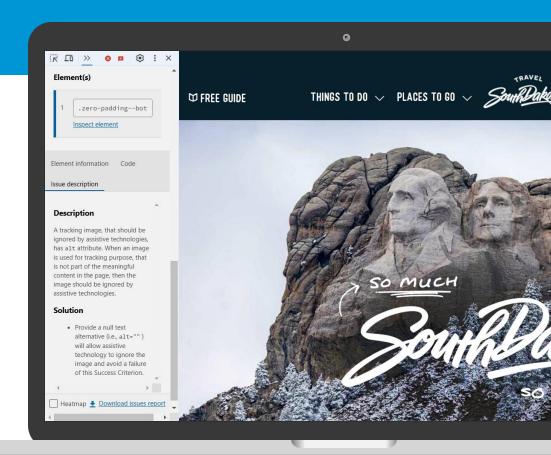- Custom content geared towards travelers with disabilities.

- Content is housed in a 'hub' which is linked in the main navigation.

Website Optimizations

- **Continuous** Analysis (WCAG 2.2 AA):
  - Sitemap based automated scans
  - Rigorous manual user testing

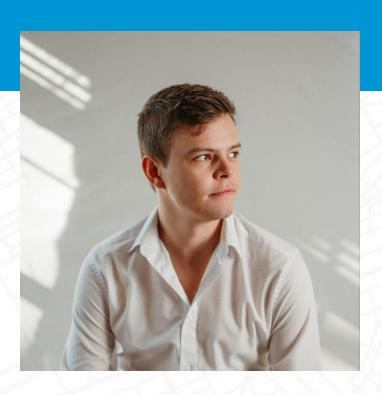- Followed by prioritized remediations as issues are detected

Q&A

Let's Connect!

August Erickson | CPACC

August.Erickson@miles
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