

Webinar Q&A Transcript

Webinar: *Your City's Website Might Be ADA Compliant — But What About Your Documents?*

Host: NLC + Streamline

Date: October 28, 2025

Legal Scope & Applicability

Q: Do ADA requirements apply to *all* public-facing systems (e.g., permitting portals, PRA requests, CRMs), or just the main website?

A: The rule applies to all public-facing digital systems and mobile apps used to provide services to the public. Each system should be reviewed for accessibility.

Q: What about internal documents that are released through public records requests?

A: Yes — once a document becomes public-facing, it needs to meet accessibility standards.

Q: Do these requirements apply to emails or social media posts?

A: Any public-facing digital communication should meet accessibility principles (e.g., readable alt text, color contrast, link text clarity).

PDFs & Legacy Documents

Q: We have years of old board packets and policy PDFs. Do they all need to be made compliant?

A: Generally, new documents must be compliant moving forward. For older documents (especially pre-July 1, 2024 in Colorado), agencies can include a statement noting that they were published before the compliance rule took effect and provide contact info for accessibility requests.

Q: What about long meeting packets (hundreds of pages)?

A: Start by making new packets compliant and prioritize high-traffic or frequently accessed documents. Build templates that produce accessible files from the start.

Q: How do we handle PDFs included in packets from outside applicants (like site plans or maps)?

A: Ideally, your policy should require outside parties to submit accessible files. This ensures compliance without creating extra workload for your team.

Third-Party Vendors & Tools

Q: Are cities liable if a third-party system or portal isn't accessible?

A: You're responsible for ensuring accessibility of all public-facing systems your agency uses. The best protection is to obtain a **VPAT** (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) from each vendor.

Q: What's a VPAT?

A: A VPAT is a document from a vendor that describes how their product meets accessibility standards (Section 508 and WCAG). You can request it or find it in most accessibility statements.

Q: What if a vendor doesn't have a VPAT or reports poor conformance?

A: That's a red flag. Ask them to complete a VPAT using this template: itic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat. Keep copies on file to document due diligence.

Maps, Charts, and Complex Visuals

Q: Are ArcGIS or ESRI maps exceptions to accessibility requirements?

A: No blanket exceptions exist. Agencies should provide text-based alternatives, summaries, or data tables for maps and GIS tools where possible.

Q: How do we make budget charts or graphics accessible?

A: Include clear, descriptive alt text and, when possible, a short narrative describing the data trends.

Q: What about architectural drawings, CAD files, or plan sets?

A: These are complex to remediate. Provide textual descriptions or summaries and consider posting contact information for accessible versions upon request.

Accessibility Tools & Software

Q: Are there tools that scan websites or documents for ADA compliance?

A: Yes — Streamline offers a free CheckMyDistrict.org tool for websites and DocAccess.com/start for PDFs. These generate accessibility reports for your agency.

Q: Are there screen readers we can test with?

A:

- **Free options:** NVDA (Windows), VoiceOver (Mac), and built-in OS screen readers.

- **Paid options:** JAWS is widely used by professionals with disabilities.

Q: What about automated tools like AccessiBe or AudioEye?

A: Overlay tools like AccessiBe and AudioEye are not considered compliant on their own. They can introduce accessibility barriers and should not replace proper remediation. See overlayfactsheet.com/en for more info.

Q: Any AI tools for accessibility?

A: AI can assist with tagging or suggesting alt text, but all results still need human review for accuracy.



Creating Accessible Documents

Q: How do we make headings properly?

A: Use **Styles** in Word or Google Docs (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) instead of manually changing font size or boldness. These transfer as PDF tags.

Q: Is there a checklist for making accessible PDFs?

A: Yes: [WebAIM WCAG 2 Checklist](#).

Q: How much detail should go into metadata and tags?

A: Tags should identify structure (headings, lists, paragraphs) and include alt text for all images. Metadata should include document title, author, and language.

Q: How do you handle alt text, captions, and descriptions?

A:

- **Alt Text:** Short, hidden description for screen readers.
- **Caption:** Visible text that adds context for all users.
- **Description:** Longer explanation for complex visuals like charts or infographics. Keep alt text concise—generally under 125 characters.

Q: Is it possible to be 100% compliant?

A: Full compliance is ideal, but it's an evolving process. Aim for continuous improvement and address high-impact accessibility issues first.



Training & Guidance

Q: Where can we get help or training for accessibility remediation?

A:

- Knowbility
- [The Accessibility Guy \(Shawn Jordison\)](#)
- Blind Institute of Technology

Q: Are there certifications for ADA or accessibility professionals?

A: Yes. The **IAAP CPACC** (Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies) is a leading industry credential.

Q: Are there beginner-friendly guides for creating accessible documents from the start?

A: Yes — start with internal style guides that emphasize proper structure (headings, contrast, plain language). Streamline offers a sample accessibility policy:

getstreamline.com/accessibility-policy.



Language & Translation

Q: Do ADA requirements apply to non-English documents?

A: Yes. Any document made available to the public, regardless of language, must meet accessibility standards.

You don't have to provide translations in every language unless requested, but translated versions must still be accessible.

Q: Can documents be translated automatically into other languages?

A: Yes, but automated translations still need to maintain accessible structure and alt text.



Starting Points & Next Steps

Q: This feels overwhelming — where should we start?

A:

1. Run a free [DocAccess scan](#) to identify your current PDF accessibility level.
2. Build internal templates for accessible creation (Word, Agenda Builder, etc.).
3. Create an internal accessibility policy to guide staff.
4. Train one team member or department to lead compliance efforts.

Q: Who should I contact for help with DocAccess or Streamline?

A:

- **Annelise Spargo:** annelise@getstreamline.com

- **Mac Clemmens:** mac@getstreamline.com
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Helpful Resources

- [CheckMyDistrict.org](https://checkmydistrict.org) – Website compliance scan
- [DocAccess.com/start](https://docaccess.com/start) – Free PDF accessibility scan
- [WebAIM WCAG 2 Checklist](#)
- [Overlay Factsheet](#)
- [VPAT Template \(ITIC\)](#)
- [Making PDFs Accessible – JMBM Blog](#)
- [Streamline Accessibility Policy Template](#)
- [The Accessibility Guy](#)