Establishing an Enterprise Web Accessibility Program

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Hi There, I'm Tiffany! Your UX and Tech Mentor.

As a UX & Technology leader specializing in website and app development within large organizations, I've created this resource from the valuable lessons I've learned. Dive in and make the most of it!

In the realm of digital commerce, the art of creating landing pages that convert is paramount. A well-crafted landing page isn't just a touchpoint—it's a strategic tool that aligns with both the aspirations of the business and the needs of the customer. It's not merely about capturing attention but about cultivating an environment that guides visitors towards becoming valued customers, highlighting the pivotal role of these pages in funnel optimization and customer acquisition.

Despite their critical importance, landing pages often don't receive the nuanced attention they deserve, leading many organizations to miss out on significant opportunities for conversion and engagement. My extensive experience in digital strategy and user experience design has shown me the transformative potential of effectively utilizing landing pages to not only meet but exceed both user expectations and business objectives.

This guide is crafted for those who shape digital strategies—the marketers, the UX designers, the product managers, and the visionaries. It is a comprehensive resource designed to refine your understanding and mastery of landing page creation, loaded with actionable tips, in-depth analyses, and examples that bridge theory with practical application. From beginner to expert, this guide aims to enhance your skills and empower you to construct landing pages that not only draw visitors in but also drive them towards successful conversions.

Embrace this journey through the nuances of landing page optimization. As your guide, I am here to illuminate the path and provide insights that can transform your digital outcomes. Should questions arise or further clarity be needed, I am just a conversation away.

Warm regards,

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What's Inside?

1.1 Understand Why Accessibility Matters

What are the benefits to better web Accessibility?

Making your website more accessible to everyone will not only improve your users' experience, but also reduce your legal risk, increase search engine findability, give you a competitive edge, and lower your costs. Here are the top six reasons why embracing accessibility best practices is a good idea for your digital experiences:

1. **Broader reach:** If a company doesn't implement good accessibility practices, they risk excluding a significant portion of their potential audience. For example, individuals with visual impairments may not be able to access a website that has poor color contrast or relies solely on images to convey information. On the other hand, if a company implements accessibility best practices, they can reach a wider audience and make their content available to individuals with disabilities. This can lead to increased revenue, greater engagement, and improved brand reputation.

2. **Compliance and reduction of legal risk:** Failure to comply with accessibility laws and regulations can result in lawsuits and reputational damage. For example, in 2019, the pizza chain Domino's lost a case in which they argued that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) did not apply to their website. By contrast, when companies prioritize accessibility, they can avoid costly lawsuits and demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity.

3. **Findability & SEO:** Websites that are accessible often have better semantic HTML, well-organized copy, and contextual metadata, which can improve their search engine optimization (SEO) and findability. For example, adding alt text to images can help search engines better understand the content of a website and improve its rankings. This can lead to increased traffic, more conversions, and greater visibility.

4. **User experience and usability:** When companies prioritize accessibility, they can create a better user experience for all users, not just those with disabilities. For example, improving the color contrast on a website can make it easier for all users to read text. By addressing accessibility issues, companies can also improve the usability of their website, which can lead to increased engagement, improved conversion rates, and higher customer satisfaction.

5. **Competitive edge:** By making their website more accessible than their competitors, companies can differentiate themselves in the market and expand their audience. For example, if two online retailers offer similar products but one has a more accessible website, individuals with disabilities are more likely to choose the accessible retailer. This can lead to increased revenue, greater customer loyalty, and improved brand reputation.

6. **Cost savings:** Addressing accessibility issues early in the design and development process can prevent expensive retrofits or lawsuits. For example, if a company builds an inaccessible website and is later sued for discrimination, they may need to pay for expensive retrofits to make the website accessible. By contrast, if they prioritize accessibility from the start, they can avoid these costs and create a more cost-effective solution. Additionally, a more accessible website can cut costs for businesses by enabling more customers to complete tasks and transactions online, rather than needing one-to-one support.

7. **Reputation:** Prioritizing accessibility demonstrates a company's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which can build a positive reputation with customers, employees, and partners. By creating a more inclusive environment, companies can build trust, loyalty, and a positive brand reputation.

Why do so many companies struggle to implement accessible sites?

If accessibility is so important, why do so many companies struggle to implement accessible sites Accessibility can be challenging for enterprises due to various reasons.

One of the main challenges faced by enterprises is the multiple versions and levels of compliance of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). As technologies have become more complex, the WCAG has evolved over time, resulting in two different versions and three levels of conformance, each with their own set of testable criteria. This can create confusion for enterprises, who may struggle to determine which version and level of WCAG they need to comply with.

Another challenge is the unclear and sometimes conflicting standards within the WCAG. The WCAG is a technical guide, which can be incomplete, circuitous, and confusing, making it difficult for enterprises to ensure compliance. It can be tough for enterprises to know exactly how to apply certain success criteria to their unique website. Even if they are vigilant and good-intentioned in their efforts to ensure compliance, they may still carry a risk of not being able to meet all 38 success criteria listed in the WCAG. Implementing an item in the manner outlined in the WGAC might create another accessibility challenge, create a usability issue, or conflict with brand standards.

Organizational constraints can also pose a challenge to accessibility in enterprises. Even when companies set bold goals to make their sites more inclusive, the time and expense of identifying and correcting accessibility issues can be a barrier. Technology roadmaps are often jam-packed, and accessibility fixes may not be high priority. Older legacy platforms with "delicate" code bases may require complete refactoring, which can be a costly and time-consuming process. Moreover, team members need to be upskilled to learn how to conduct audits and implement fixes, which can further increase the time and cost involved.

1.2
Understand the Web Accessibility Challenge

If you have researched web accessibility, then you have quickly learned that there is a lot of information and it's difficult to understand what is relevant, useful, and up-to-date. To avoid all of this, I recommend that you build foundational knowledge by studying just two areas.

A major challenge in the accessibility space is that decisions about how a site should be implemented are often made by site owners, designers, and developers with little-to-no experience or exposure to people with disabilities or assistive technologies. This was the case with me.

To build empathy and better understand what it feels like to face accessibility challenges, I am actively learning more about disabilities, assistive technologies, and alternative browsing preferences. If your organization is involved in this effort, I encourage you to step into the shoes of a person who experiences web accessibility issues by researching the areas highlighted below.

We will discuss the following topics:
- Learn about Common Disabilities
- Learn About Popular Assistive Technologies
- Learn About Alternative Browsing Preferences
- Consider Combinations and Intersections

Learn About Common Disabilities

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are more than 1 billion people worldwide who live with some form of disability. While not all of these disabilities affect a person's ability to access the internet, a significant number of people with disabilities do face barriers when using digital technologies. This means that a portion of your website users will have a diverse range of abilities across the following categories:

Vision
This category includes people with low vision, color blindness, and complete blindness. People with low vision may have difficulty seeing small text, and those with color blindness may have difficulty distinguishing between certain colors. Blind users rely on screen readers and other assistive technologies to navigate websites and consume content.

- Accessibility issue: Difficulty seeing small text or low contrast content
- Assistive technology: Screen magnifiers or screen readers, such as JAWS or VoiceOver

Mobility
This category includes people with physical disabilities, such as those who use wheelchairs, crutches, or other mobility aids. They may have difficulty using a mouse or keyboard and may rely on alternative input devices, such as voice recognition software or specialized keyboards.

- Accessibility issue: Difficulty using a mouse or keyboard due to limited dexterity or range of motion
- Assistive technology: Alternative input devices, such as head tracking systems or speech recognition software like Dragon NaturallySpeaking

Auditory
This category includes people who are deaf or hard of hearing. They may have difficulty consuming audio content, such as videos or podcasts, and may rely on closed captions or transcripts to understand the content.

- Accessibility issue: Difficulty hearing audio or spoken content
- Assistive technology: Closed captions or transcripts, as well as assistive listening devices like hearing aids or cochlear implants

Neurological
This category includes people with conditions such as epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease. These conditions can affect a person's motor skills, memory, and ability to concentrate, which can impact their ability to use websites and consume content.

- Accessibility issue: Difficulty processing information quickly or accurately, or issues with memory or attention
- Assistive technology: Text-to-speech software or screen readers, as well as cognitive assistive technologies like reminders or task managers

Cognitive

This category includes people with cognitive disabilities, such as those with dyslexia or intellectual disabilities. They may have difficulty processing complex information and may benefit from simplified content, clear navigation, and visual aids.

- Accessibility issue: Difficulty understanding complex language or navigating complicated interfaces
- Assistive technology: Simplified language options or easy-to-use interfaces, as well as assistive technologies like visual aids or voice assistants

Medical

This category includes people with chronic illnesses, such as arthritis or fibromyalgia. They may have difficulty using a mouse or keyboard for long periods of time and may need alternative input devices or voice recognition software.

- Accessibility issue: Sensitivity to certain colors or patterns, or issues with flashing or animated content
- Assistive technology: Options to adjust color schemes or remove animations, as well as seizure alert devices

Psychological

This category includes people with mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD. These conditions can affect a person's ability to concentrate and may impact their ability to use websites and consume content.

- Accessibility issue: Sensitivity to certain types of content or situations, or issues with anxiety or stress related to website use
- Assistive technology: Tools for managing stress or anxiety, such as meditation or breathing apps, as well as tools for filtering or blocking certain types of content.

Further reading
- [Common types of disabilities](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [WebAIM](#)

> **NOTE**
>
> Whether a person is living with a disability or not, it is important to remember: "all people, over the course of their lives, traffic between times of relative independence and dependence (Hendren).

Learn About Popular Assistive Technologies

Some of your website users may be using assistive technologies to access your site. According to a survey conducted by WebAIM in 2020, out of a sample of 1,011 individuals with disabilities who use the internet, 88.9% reported using at least one assistive technology.

Assistive technologies are devices that allow individuals with disabilities an alternative method to interact with the computer (beyond the standard mouse and keyboard). They serve as a bridge between the user and their device.

Let's learn about common assistive technologies and how they work.

Screen readers
- Screen readers are software applications that read aloud the content of a digital screen, including text, links, and other elements.
- They are used by people who are blind, have low vision, or have difficulty reading text on a screen.
- Challenges people may have when using screen readers include inaccuracies in reading text, difficulty navigating complex web pages, and limited compatibility with certain websites or applications.
- Screen readers are fairly common and are included as a built-in accessibility feature on most devices.

Navigation hardware
- Navigation hardware includes tools such as joysticks, trackballs, and specialized keyboards that enable users to navigate digital interfaces.
- They are used by people who have mobility impairments or who have difficulty using traditional input devices such as a mouse or touchpad.
- Challenges people may have when using navigation hardware include difficulty finding compatible devices for their specific needs and limited functionality in some applications or websites.
- Navigation hardware is less common than other assistive technologies, but is still widely used by those who need it.

Switch inputs
- Switch inputs allow users to perform actions such as clicking, typing, or navigating through digital interfaces using a single button or switch.
- They are used by people who have mobility impairments or who have difficulty using traditional input devices such as a mouse or keyboard.
- Challenges people may have when using switch inputs include finding compatible devices for their specific needs and limited functionality in some applications or websites.

- Switch inputs are less common than other assistive technologies, but are still widely used by those who need them.

Eye trackers
- Eye trackers use specialized cameras and software to track the movement of a user's eyes, allowing them to interact with digital interfaces using eye movements.
- They are used by people who have mobility impairments or who have difficulty using traditional input devices such as a mouse or keyboard.
- Challenges people may have when using eye trackers include limited compatibility with some applications or websites, and the need for specialized hardware and software.
- Eye trackers are less common than other assistive technologies, but are becoming more widely available.

Speech recognition
- Speech recognition software allows users to input text and commands using their voice.
- They are used by people who have mobility impairments or who have difficulty using traditional input devices such as a mouse or keyboard.
- Challenges people may have when using speech recognition include inaccuracies in recognizing speech, the need for a quiet environment, and limited compatibility with some applications or websites.
- Speech recognition software is becoming more common and is often included as a built-in accessibility feature on many devices.

Screen magnifiers
- Screen magnifiers enlarge the content of a digital screen, making it easier for users with low vision to read.
- They are used by people who have low vision or who have difficulty reading small text on a screen.
- Challenges people may have when using screen magnifiers include distortion of text and images when enlarged, and difficulty navigating complex web pages.
- Screen magnifiers are fairly common and are included as a built-in accessibility feature on most devices.

Further reading
Web Accessibility Perspectives videos

Learn About Alternative Browsing Preferences

You need not have a disability or use an assistive technology to experience accessibility issues. Users who customize their browser experiences to better suit their needs and preferences may also experience challenges viewing your content. Here are examples:

1. **RSS readers and browser readability extensions:** These take the structured content of a page and display it with clean typography and styles. These readers and extensions focus on making content as readable as possible, sometimes even hiding headers, footers, and ads.

2. **Text resizing**: Some users may need to increase the font size of text to make it easier to read. However, if the website's layout is not responsive or the text is hardcoded in images, it may become distorted and difficult to read when the font size is increased.

3. **High contrast mode:** Users with low vision or color blindness may need to use high contrast mode to distinguish between different elements on a webpage. However, if the website's design relies heavily on color to convey information, it may become difficult for users to navigate the site in high contrast mode.

4. **Voice control:** Some users prefer to use voice control software to navigate websites. However, if the website is not designed with accessibility in mind, it may not be possible for these users to access all of the site's content or functionality using voice commands.

5. **Text-to-speech:** Users with visual impairments may use text-to-speech software to have website content read aloud to them. However, if the website's design is not optimized for text-to-speech software, it may not be able to accurately read all of the site's content.

6. **High contrast mode:** Some users may prefer to use high contrast mode to improve visibility, particularly those with vision impairments. However, if your website does not have a clear visual hierarchy or proper color contrast, it can make it difficult to navigate and read for users in high contrast mode.

7. **Zooming**: Users who need to zoom in on content to see it more clearly may experience issues with websites that are not optimized for zooming. This can cause text or images to become distorted or difficult to read.

8. **Keyboard navigation:** Users who prefer to rely on keyboard navigation rather than a mouse may encounter issues with websites that have poor keyboard accessibility. This can include issues with tab order, lack of keyboard shortcuts, and more.

9. **Text-to-speech:** Some users may use text-to-speech software to read web content aloud. However, if the website has not been properly structured with headings, alternative text

for images, and other accessibility features, the text-to-speech software may not be able to accurately convey the content to the user.

Consider Combinations and Intersections

I have come to the conclusion that the only way to truly overcome the accessibility challenge is to assumptions about users' abilities, assistive technologies, or browsing preferences. Instead, design content and experiences for the lowest common denominator or designing for the simplest and most basic user experience that will still meet the needs of all users, regardless of their abilities or technologies. Your content and experiences should work even if images, fancy functionality, and interactive elements are stripped out.

When I started my quest to learn more about users impacted by accessibility issues, I did not imagine how nuanced the space was. Here are the major complexities that I uncovered:

- **Disabilities can exist in various combinations, leading to difficult-to-anticipate challenges.** Each of the categories listed above can independently create barriers to accessing your website. But you must also consider combinations across and within each of these categories. For instance, minor disabilities can combine to create major challenges.

- **Assistive technologies are used in different ways to different degrees. Not every user with a disability is using an assistive technology**. There are many possible reasons for this, such as (1) their disability not being severe enough to benefit from assistive-technology support, (2) assistive technologies that could help them being too expensive, (3) unawareness of technologies that could help them access the web, or (4) a secondary impairment and use of technology specific to another need.

I have come to the conclusion that the only way to truly overcome the accessibility challenge is to avoid making assumptions about users' abilities, assistive technologies, or browsing preferences. Instead, design content and experiences for the lowest common denominator. In other words, design for the simplest and most basic user experience that will still meet the needs of all users, regardless of their abilities or technologies. Your content and experiences should work even if images, fancy functionality, and interactive elements are stripped out.

1.3
Learn About Web Accessibility and the Law

Web accessibility-related lawsuits are on the rise, and most corporate websites are not compliant. Getting started on your accessibility journey can be difficult, especially when trying to determine which laws apply to you. Below are four steps you can take to better understand accessibility regulations.

Disclaimer: I am not a lawyer. This is not legal advice. This are simply lessons learned from my lived experience.

Research Title III of the American's with Disabilities Act

The first step in understanding web accessibility regulations is to look at Title III of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), which has been interpreted by the courts to apply to websites. In a nutshell, it requires that organizations make a good faith effort to deliver their websites and content in a way that everyone, including persons with disabilities, can enjoy "full and equal" use.

But simply understanding the ADA is not enough because it does not provide explicit guidance on how to ensure that your site is compliant. For that missing piece, you'll have to look to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). In the absence of an explicit web accessibility law, the U.S. courts and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have continually referenced WCAG as the standard to gauge whether websites are accessible.

Study the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

The second step in understanding web accessibility regulations is to look at the WCAG. The WCAG was originally developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to provide basic standards that all websites, apps and electronic content should adhere to. You can find the WCAG here.

Before diving head-first into the WGAC, I do want to offer you a warning: it can be overwhelming. For one, navigating it can be exhausting. It includes 38 standards across 4 categories, multiple versions, multiple levels of compliance, and multiple success criteria. Secondly, some of the standards are difficult to understand, circuitous and can conflict with each other.

To help, here is a quick overview of what you need to know:
1. There are multiple different versions of the WCAG. Version 1.0 was published in 1999 and Version 2.0 was published in 2008. As technologies have become more complex, version 2.1 was published in 2018.

2. The WCAG includes three levels of compliance:
    1. A (lowest level) – Minimum level of compliance
    2. AA : (mid range): Acceptable level of compliance for most companies
    3. AAA (highest level): Highest (and most complex) level of compliance

3. Each organization needs to decide for themselves which version and level of compliance is appropriate, however, WGAC 2.1 Level AA has been used as the basis of several lawsuits and is generally used targeted by accessibility-minded organizations.

If you are getting started in this space, I would recommend using a simplified checklist or guide published by 3rd parties may help you better understand the WCAG. It is a great start. But do not rely exclusively on this. All guides are an interpretation of the WCAG. There is no replacement for learning the real thing.

Check out old and new accessibility lawsuits

A third step in understanding web accessibility regulations is to study accessibility lawsuits. This will provide insight into what web accessibility challenges exist and how the courts are interpreting the law.

High-profile lawsuits include:
1. NAD v Netflix (2012) – Netflix
2. Gil v Winn-Dixie (2017) – Winn-Dixie
3. Markett vs. Five Guys Enterprises (2017) – Five Guys
4. Mendizabal v. Nike Inc. (2017) – Nike
5. Robles v Domino's Pizza LLC (ongoing) – Dominos

If you are interested in learning more about accessibility lawsuits, check out these resources:
1. DOJ Title III Actions(search for " accessibility" on the page)
2. 4 Key Takeaways from 2018 Web Accessibility Lawsuits
3. ADA Enforcement Activities
4. When Good Sites Go Bad
5. General Statistics about Lawsuits
6. UsableNet Lawsuit Recap Report

Stay abreast of emerging regulations

A fourth step in understanding accessibility regulations is to stay in-the-know about new regulatory developments and how they apply to your organization. At the moment, the two areas that I am watching are: (1) the Online Accessibility Act and (2) the Unruh Act.

Online Accessibility Act. The Online Accessibility Act is a law that was recently proposed to Congress in October 2020. No further action has been taken beyond the introduction of the law, but this is something to keep an eye on.

Unruh Act. The Unruh Act is a parallel California state civil rights act which allows persons bringing forth a lawsuit to capture additional damages beyond those provided in the ADA. Companies should pay attention to this for two reasons. First, if your website is visible in California (which is pretty much every website on the web, right?) then a California resident could potentially bring forth a suit which names the Unruh Act. Second, California has been setting standards that other states tend to follow. The California Privacy Right Act, for example, is a template that other states are considering adopting. The same could happen with the Unruh Act.

2.1
Establish Web Accessibility Enterprise Processes

When you have multiple internal and external websites and applications within your organization, you need a formal program and processes for ensuring accessibility compliance. The following actions will help you create – and maintain – clear policy and standards and establish a set of processes and tools to ensure that accessibility is a core part of your organization's culture and that all users can access your digital content.

Develop accessibility policy

The first step in establishing such a program is to develop an accessibility policy. This should be a documented statement that clearly outlines your organization's approach to accessibility, including goals, standards, and procedures. This policy should be communicated to all stakeholders within your organization to ensure that accessibility is a core part of your culture. Here are a few examples of accessibility policies or statements from different organizations:

1. **Microsoft:** "We strive to make our products and services accessible to everyone. This means designing for people of all abilities and disabilities, including those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, have low vision or are blind, have cognitive, motor, or speech disabilities, or have other disabilities. We believe that accessibility and inclusion are essential to delivering on our mission to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."

2. **Google:** "Our goal is to make Google's products and services universally accessible. We are committed to building products that are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. We believe that everyone should be able to use the internet to its full potential, and we are actively working to make that vision a reality."

3. **The University of Michigan:** "The University of Michigan is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities. We recognize that accessibility is an essential aspect of our mission to provide excellent education, research, and service to the community. We are committed to providing equal access to all of our programs, services, and activities."

4. **Airbnb:** "Airbnb is committed to making our platform accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. We are working to ensure that our website, mobile apps, and other digital products meet or exceed the accessibility standards set by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA."

5. **The United States Department of Justice:** "The Department of Justice is committed to making its websites and other digital platforms accessible to individuals with disabilities. We strive to meet or exceed the accessibility standards set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA."

Develop accessibility standards

Once you have a clear policy in place, it's time to develop accessibility standards that align with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). By covering these points, the standards document can provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the success criteria for accessibility, which can help ensure that all stakeholders (designers, developers, and content creators) are aligned and working towards the same goals)

What's included in an accessibility standards document?
Below is an outline of what could be included in an accessibility standards document. It's important to note that the specific contents of an accessibility standards document may vary depending on the needs and goals of the organization.

1. Introduction: Provide a brief overview of the purpose of the document and the importance of accessibility standards.
2. Scope: Define the scope of the accessibility standards document, including the platforms and applications covered by the standards.
3. Applicable Standards: List the accessibility standards that the organization is committed to complying with, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 or Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Success Criteria: Describe the specific success criteria that will be used to measure compliance with the applicable accessibility standards.
5. Roles and Responsibilities: Detail the responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in ensuring accessibility compliance, such as designers, developers, testers, and content creators.
6. Design and Development Guidelines: Provide guidance on designing and developing accessible platforms and applications, including best practices for color contrast, keyboard navigation, and content structure.
7. Testing Guidelines: Detail the testing procedures that will be used to verify accessibility compliance, including manual testing and automated testing using tools.
8. Remediation Procedures: Outline the procedures that will be used to address accessibility issues that are identified through testing or other means.
9. Training and Awareness: Detail the training and awareness initiatives that will be implemented to ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance of accessibility and are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to comply with accessibility standards.
10. Monitoring and Reporting: Describe the procedures that will be used to monitor compliance with accessibility standards and report progress to relevant stakeholders.

What are examples of success criteria?
What are examples of success criteria that may be used within an accessibility standards document:

1. Provide alternative text for non-text content (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 1.1.1).
2. Ensure keyboard accessibility (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.1.1).

3. Provide sufficient color contrast (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 1.4.3).
4. Ensure content can be presented in different ways (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 1.3.1).
5. Provide captions for videos (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 1.2.2).
6. Provide a skip to main content link (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.4.1).
7. Ensure content does not cause seizures (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.3.1).
8. Provide clear and concise error messages (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 3.3.1).
9. Ensure headings and labels are descriptive (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.4.6).
10. Ensure all functionality is available via a keyboard (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.1.2).

Considerations when writing standards

When explaining success criteria in an accessibility standards document, the following points should be covered:

1. A clear explanation of the success criteria, including why it is important for accessibility.
2. The specific requirements that need to be met to achieve the success criteria.
3. Any exceptions or limitations to the success criteria.
4. How the success criteria will be tested or measured to ensure compliance.
5. The level of compliance required (e.g., A, AA, or AAA).
6. Any additional guidance or best practices for achieving the success criteria.
7. Relevant references to established accessibility standards or guidelines, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
8. Consideration for future updates or changes to the success criteria or related standards.

Develop Audit Plan

Step 1: Identify and Prioritize Platforms
Once you have established your policy and standards, the next step is to identify and prioritize the platforms that require an accessibility compliance audit. This includes both internal and external websites and applications that are essential to your organization's operations and end-users. Prioritizing the platforms is crucial, as it ensures that the most critical platforms are audited first, and resources are allocated appropriately. The ultimate goal is to prioritize enterprise platforms based on their criticality to end-users and the business.

Here are activities involved with this step:
1. Inventory all internal and external websites and applications: Identify all the platforms that exist within the organization and their purposes.
2. Prioritize the platforms: Once all the platforms have been identified, prioritize them based on criticality to end-users and business. This can be done by considering the frequency of use, the number of users, the impact of platform downtime, and the strategic importance of the platform to the business.
3. Conduct a risk assessment: After prioritizing the platforms, conduct a risk assessment to determine the level of risk that non-compliance poses to the organization. This can be done by considering the likelihood and impact of non-compliance, and the potential legal, financial, and reputational consequences.

Step 2: Set KPIs and targets
Establishing accessibility KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) is an important step in ensuring that your organization is making progress towards achieving its accessibility goals. By setting clear metrics, you can measure the effectiveness of your accessibility efforts, motivate teams to work towards improving the accessibility of their platform, and track improvements over time. This can also help you to identify areas that need more attention or resources.

Here are activities involved with this step:
- **Document business goals:** Start by identifying the goals of your accessibility program. These goals may include improving the user experience for people with disabilities, reducing legal risks, or promoting diversity and inclusion.
- **Establish a scoring model:** Build a scoring model based on pre-established audit criteria, such as WCAG guidelines. The model may weigh different criteria differently based on their importance. Additionally, the model should be transparent and easy to understand for all stakeholders.
- **Set KPIs and Targets:** After identifying your business goals and scoring model, determine the specific metrics that will help you track progress towards them. Establish a benchmark that you would like all platforms to achieve. This sets a standard towards which teams can strive, and helps ensure consistency across platforms.

Below are some examples of accessibility targets or metrics. Note that these targets or metrics should be aligned with your organization's accessibility goals and priorities.

1. Percentage of web pages or digital documents that meet a certain level of accessibility standard, such as WCAG 2.1 AA or AAA
2. Percentage of mobile apps or software products that meet a certain level of accessibility standard
3. Number of accessibility issues identified and resolved during an audit or testing process
4. Percentage increase in user satisfaction for people with disabilities after implementing accessibility improvements
5. Number of employees who complete accessibility training or certification
6. Percentage increase in website traffic from users with disabilities after implementing accessibility improvements
7. Reduction in legal risks associated with accessibility lawsuits or complaints
8. Number of accessibility-related inquiries or feedback received from customers or stakeholders
9. Time required to complete tasks by users with disabilities compared to users without disabilities, before and after implementing accessibility improvements
10. Number of third-party vendors or partners who comply with your accessibility policies and standards.

Step 3: Understand current state of all platforms

To ensure that all platforms are meeting the organization's accessibility goals, it's important to understand their current state. By understanding the current state of all platforms, organizations can identify gaps and prioritize resources to improve accessibility across all platforms. This can be achieved through conducting quick audits and creating a current state report card. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

Here are activities involved with this step:

- **Conduct quick audits:** Conducting quick audits is an important first step in understanding the current state of all platforms. These audits should be designed to provide a general score based on a high-level review of the platform's accessibility. If necessary, professionals can be hired to conduct the audit. It's important to remember that these quick audits do not have to be perfect but should provide a general understanding of the platform's accessibility.
- **Create a current state report card:** Once the audits are complete, it's important to document the score for each platform. A report card can be created to rate each platform against the established accessibility KPIs and targets. This report card can serve as a valuable tool for identifying which platforms require more attention and resources to meet accessibility goals. It's important to ensure that all stakeholders have access to this report card to facilitate transparency and accountability.

Step 4: Create an Accessibility Roadmap

To ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach to achieving accessibility compliance, it is important to determine the target platforms and create a roadmap for auditing and fixing any accessibility issues identified.

Here are activities involved with this step:

- **Determine target platforms.** Start by identifying the platforms that will be audited based on priorities, risk, and general accessibility score. Consider the platforms that are critical to your organization's business and end-users. Once you have determined the target platforms, you can move on to creating a roadmap for auditing and fixing any accessibility issues.
- **Create roadmap.** The roadmap should outline which platforms will be audited and when, taking into account platform owner alignment and their technology roadmaps. It is important to communicate with platform owners and ensure they are aware of the audit and potential fixes. Keep in mind that addressing accessibility issues will require developer time, so it is important to adjust their technology roadmaps accordingly.

As a note, you should regularly review and update the roadmap to ensure that it remains aligned with the organization's goals and priorities. The roadmap should also take into account any changes in technology or standards that may impact accessibility compliance.

Step 5: Develop Audit Plans

To ensure that your organization's platforms are audited for accessibility compliance, you need to develop a comprehensive audit plan. By developing a comprehensive audit plan, you can ensure that your organization's platforms are audited for accessibility compliance in a systematic and organized manner.

Here are the key steps to follow:

1. **Create project plans:** Start by determining which audits need to be completed based on the roadmap that you have created. Establish a timeline for completing each audit for every platform. Ensure that the timeline is realistic and takes into account the availability of resources and personnel.
2. **Allocate resources:** Allocate resources based on the prioritized platforms and the results of the risk assessment. Assign more resources to the platforms that pose the highest risk to the organization. Consider the expertise of the team members and allocate resources accordingly. If necessary, secure the services of external experts.
3. **Align teams:** Ensure that all teams are aware of the upcoming audits and that they are included in their technology roadmap. Align the teams by setting clear expectations for their involvement in the audit process. Provide them with the necessary resources and support to ensure that they are successful in meeting the audit requirements.\

Establish your accessibility auditing process

Having a formal web accessibility audit process is critical to ensuring that people, processes, and tools are in place to identify accessibility issues and address them effectively. This process allows organizations to identify and fix accessibility issues before they become major problems, which can save significant time and resources in the long run. By establishing a systematic approach to auditing, organizations can ensure that accessibility is integrated into their standard work processes, minimizing the likelihood of missing critical accessibility issues. It also helps organizations to stay up-to-date with changing accessibility standards and guidelines, and to ensure that their digital platforms are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. Ultimately, a formal accessibility auditing process is an investment in creating a more inclusive and equitable digital environment, which benefits everyone.

Once you have identified and prioritized the platforms, you can start the auditing process. There are many auditing tools available that can help automate this process, including manual testing, automated testing, and user testing. It's important to remember that the auditing process is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process to ensure that your platforms remain accessible.

Here are steps for establishing an accessibility auditing process:
1. **Identify target platforms:** Determine which platforms (websites, applications, etc.) your organization is responsible for and should be audited for accessibility. This may include customer-facing platforms, internal tools, and other digital assets.
2. **Determine audit frequency:** Decide how often each platform should be audited. This may depend on factors such as the complexity of the platform, the frequency of updates, and the risk of legal action.
3. **Select auditing tool(s):** Choose an auditing tool or tools that meet your organization's needs and can test for compliance with relevant accessibility guidelines and standards.
4. **Establish audit criteria:** Develop criteria for evaluating the results of each audit. This may include a checklist of accessibility issues to look for, such as missing alt text or color contrast issues.
5. **Assign roles and responsibilities:** Determine who will be responsible for conducting audits, reviewing results, and making corrective actions. Depending on the size of your organization, this may involve a team of dedicated accessibility specialists or assigning roles to existing team members.
6. **Conduct audits and document findings:** Perform audits on each platform according to the established criteria. Document the findings, including the issues found, their severity, and their location on the platform.
7. **Develop a remediation plan:** Prioritize the issues found and develop a plan for addressing them. This may involve assigning tasks to different team members, determining timelines for fixing issues, and establishing a process for testing fixes.
8. **Track progress:** Maintain documentation of the remediation process, including any changes made to the platform and decisions made. Keep track of progress over time and update the accessibility report card as changes are made.

9. **Re-audit and reassess:** Regularly re-audit platforms to ensure that they remain accessible and address any new issues that arise. Reassess the auditing process itself periodically to ensure that it remains effective and efficient.

Select and setup accessibility auditing tools

Audit tools are software programs that can automatically or semi-automatically evaluate web content and applications against accessibility guidelines and standards. These tools can scan web pages and provide a list of accessibility errors or warnings, and suggest ways to fix them. They can also provide insights into the accessibility of specific elements of a web page, such as images, links, forms, and tables. Audit tools can be helpful in identifying common accessibility issues and provide a starting point for addressing accessibility concerns. However, they should not be relied on solely for accessibility testing as they can also produce false positives and miss important issues that require manual testing.

Here are some steps for setting up accessibility auditing tools:
1. **Research the available tools:** Start by researching the different accessibility auditing tools available in the market. Understand the features and capabilities of each tool and identify the ones that are best suited to your organization's needs.
2. **Determine which tools to use:** Once you have a list of potential tools, evaluate them based on factors such as cost, ease of use, and compatibility with your existing technology stack. Select the tools that are the best fit for your organization.
3. **Create a list of auditing tools:** Once you have determined which tools to use, create a list of the specific auditing tools you will be using. This may include automated testing tools, manual testing tools, and tools for monitoring accessibility compliance over time.
4. **Train the team on the tools:** Provide training to the team members who will be using the tools. This will help them understand how to use the tools effectively and maximize their benefit.
5. **Integrate the tools into the workflow:** Integrate the tools into your workflow to ensure that accessibility is considered throughout the development lifecycle. This may involve setting up automated testing during development, manual testing during quality assurance, and ongoing monitoring of accessibility compliance after deployment.

By establishing a clear process for selecting and using accessibility auditing tools, you can ensure that your team has the necessary resources to identify and address accessibility issues in a timely and cost-effective manner. This can help improve the overall accessibility of your digital products and services, while also reducing the risk of costly accessibility-related legal challenges.

Establish accessibility roles & responsibilities

Multiple people are involved in ensuring accessibility, each playing different roles. The goal is to embed accessibility into standard work processes and roles. Here is a breakdown of responsibilities for each role:

1. **UX researchers and designers:** As the first line of defense against inaccessible design, UX researchers and designers have the crucial responsibility of conducting accessibility audits to identify issues and recommend solutions. They should build accessible design systems and wireframes from the start, ensuring that accessibility is integrated into every aspect of the design process. They need to be knowledgeable about the latest accessibility standards and guidelines, as well as understand how users with disabilities interact with digital products.
2. **Developers:** Developers play an important role in ensuring accessibility by making sure that new experiences and capabilities align with accessibility standards. They need to learn how to develop sites with accessibility in mind and ensure that any fixes needed are implemented promptly. They should have a solid understanding of web accessibility standards and best practices, and be able to use assistive technologies themselves to better understand how users with disabilities interact with digital products.
3. **Testers:** Testers are responsible for adding accessibility checks to the testing criteria and using assistive technologies during the testing process. They need to understand the different types of disabilities and how they affect the user experience, and how assistive technologies help overcome these barriers. They should test accessibility at various stages of the development process, from early design mockups to final code, to ensure that any issues are identified and resolved before launch.
4. **Leaders:** Leaders are responsible for making sure that the accessibility vision and business case are well-understood across the organization. They need to ensure that accessibility is given the priority it deserves and that the necessary resources are allocated. They should support and reinforce the efforts of the accessibility champion and ensure that accessibility is integrated into the organization's culture and values.
5. **Accessibility champion:** The accessibility champion is the person responsible for ensuring that everyone understands what accessibility is, why it is important, and how to implement accessible experiences. This person should have a deep understanding of web accessibility and should be able to train others in the organization on accessibility best practices. They should work closely with UX researchers and designers, developers, and testers to ensure that accessibility is integrated into all processes and workflows. They should also communicate the benefits of accessible design to the organization and build a strong business case for accessibility.

Establish a process for ensuring compliance

Establishing a process for tracking web accessibility health is essential to ensure compliance. This process can help ensure accessibility compliance, provide a reference point for future audits, and demonstrate the organization's good faith effort towards accessibility.
Here are some steps to complete the process:

1. **Create a web accessibility report card:** A report card can list all platforms, their respective owners, and their current accessibility score. This score can be determined based on audits conducted to evaluate the platform's accessibility compliance.
2. **Maintain records:** It is crucial to maintain records of all audits, findings, issues, recommendations, changes made to each platform, and the decisions made. These records help track the progress of each platform and serve as a reference point for future audits.
3. **Share report with key parties:** Collaborate with platform owners to help them improve their accessibility score. Share the accessibility report with leadership, emphasizing the importance of accessibility across the organization.
4. **Regularly track your accessibility scores:** Making accessibility scores a key performance indicator (KPI) helps prioritize accessibility improvements. Tracking accessibility KPIs can motivate teams to work towards improving the accessibility of their platforms. Regularly tracking and reporting on your accessibility KPIs can help you to identify areas for improvement and ensure that your organization is making progress towards its accessibility goals. By setting measurable targets and regularly monitoring progress, you can create a culture of accessibility within your organization and demonstrate your commitment to creating inclusive digital experiences.

2.2
Establish a Web Accessibility Team

In order for accessibility to rise to the top of the priority list, key members of your organization need to be responsible for promoting, supporting, and/or implementing new accessibility policies and standards.

Appoint an Accessibility Champion

An accessibility champion is a person who is responsible for ensuring that all digital assets within the organization meet accessibility standards. This person is typically a subject matter expert who has a deep understanding of web accessibility and can act as a resource for the rest of the organization. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that accessibility is integrated into all aspects of the organization's digital strategy.

Some of their key responsibilities may include:
- Developing accessibility policies and guidelines
- Conducting accessibility training sessions
- Reviewing websites and applications for accessibility compliance
- Providing guidance and support to developers and designers

Examples of people who could fulfill the role of accessibility champion include a web developer with a passion for accessibility, a UX designer with expertise in inclusive design, or a dedicated accessibility consultant.

Appoint Accessibility Leadership Sponsors

Accessibility leadership sponsors are senior members of the organization who can champion the need for accessibility and fund accessibility efforts. These individuals are typically responsible for securing the necessary resources to ensure that accessibility is integrated into the organization's digital strategy.

Some of their key responsibilities may include:
- Advocating for accessibility initiatives across the organization
- Securing funding for accessibility training and resources
- Ensuring that accessibility is integrated into the organization's policies and guidelines

Examples of people who could fulfill the role of accessibility leadership sponsor include C-level executives, directors, or other high-level decision-makers.

Outline Change Targets
Change targets are individuals within the organization who are responsible for promoting, supporting, or implementing accessibility standards. These individuals may include web developers, designers, content creators, and other stakeholders. Some of their key responsibilities may include:
- Implementing accessibility best practices into their work
- Advocating for accessibility within their team or department
- Participating in accessibility training sessions

Examples of change targets may include web developers who are responsible for ensuring that the organization's websites meet accessibility standards, designers who are responsible for creating accessible interfaces, or content creators who are responsible for ensuring that content is accessible to all users.

Educate your Web Accessibility Team

Increasing awareness and education is a crucial component of any successful accessibility program. This involves educating all stakeholders about the importance of accessibility, the impact of inaccessible digital assets, and best practices for creating accessible websites and applications. Some ways to increase awareness and education may include:

- Providing accessibility training sessions for all stakeholders
- Creating accessibility guidelines and standards for the organization
- Hosting events and workshops to promote accessibility
- Encouraging ongoing learning and development around accessibility best practices

Examples of educational resources that could be provided include accessibility checklists, WCAG guidelines, accessibility testing tools, and case studies that demonstrate the importance of accessibility.

2.3
Implement a Web Accessibility Communication & Training Plan

Accessibility is an important consideration when creating digital products, but it can be challenging to ensure that all team members understand the needs of users with disabilities and are able to create products that are accessible to everyone. To address this challenge, enterprise teams can create a communication and training plan that helps key team members gain skills needed to understand standards, identify issues, and implement fixes.

Build a Communication Plan for the Enterprise

Having a formal communication plan for accessibility is crucial for several reasons. It helps to raise awareness of accessibility issues and promotes a culture of inclusivity and empathy among team members. It ensures that all team members understand their roles and responsibilities in creating accessible products and provides a framework for accountability. A formal communication plan can also help to reduce the risk of non-compliance with accessibility laws and regulations and avoid costly legal battles.

Determine Audiences
When creating an accessibility communication plan for a large organization, it is important to target key audiences who will be responsible for implementing and maintaining accessibility standards. These audiences may include executives, managers, product owners, UX designers, developers, testers, and other team members involved in the creation of digital products.

Determine Topics
For each audience, the communication plan should cover topics that are relevant to their roles and responsibilities. For example, executives and managers may need to understand the business case for accessibility and the potential legal risks of non-compliance, while product owners may need to learn about accessibility standards and best practices for product development. UX designers may need training on designing for accessibility, while developers and testers may need to learn how to test for accessibility issues and implement fixes.

Determine Format and Method of Delivery
The format and method of delivery for the communication plan will depend on the organization's culture, size, and distribution of team members. It could be a combination of in-person training sessions, online training modules, newsletters, emails, and other forms of digital communication. Additionally, it's essential to make the information easily accessible and available on the company intranet or other communication channels that are used regularly by team members.

Determine Frequency
The frequency of communication should be determined by the needs of the organization and the level of urgency related to accessibility. Ideally, the communication plan should be ongoing and regularly updated to reflect changes in accessibility guidelines, best practices, and emerging issues.

Training Plan for Product Managers and Site Owners

Product managers and site owners are responsible for making strategic decisions about the products and services offered by an organization. They need to understand the importance of accessibility and how it can impact the success of their products and services. They also need to be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities when it comes to accessibility. By providing product managers and site owners with the knowledge and skills they need to prioritize accessibility, organizations can ensure that their products and services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities.

To build an effective accessibility training plan for these key stakeholders, consider the following.

Define topics to be covered
The training should cover the basics of accessibility, including relevant laws and regulations, accessibility standards and guidelines, the impact of accessibility on users, and common accessibility issues and solutions. It should also include information specific to the organization, such as its accessibility policy, process for addressing accessibility issues, and the roles and responsibilities of different team members

Define format or method of delivery
The training can be delivered in various formats, such as in-person workshops, online courses, or webinars. It should include interactive components, such as case studies, exercises, and quizzes, to ensure that learners engage with the material and retain the information. The training should also be customized to the specific needs of the organization and the learners.

Define frequency of communication
Regular communication is important to reinforce the importance of accessibility and to ensure that learners are up to date with any changes or updates. The training should be delivered on a regular basis, such as annually, and there should be ongoing communication through email, newsletters, or other channels.

1. Outcomes of the training plan: The training plan should aim to achieve the following outcomes:
- Improved understanding of accessibility laws, guidelines, and best practices
- Increased awareness of the impact of accessibility on users and the organization
- Improved ability to identify accessibility issues and implement fixes
- Increased commitment to accessibility and the willingness to prioritize it in decision-making
- Improved collaboration and communication among team members to ensure that accessibility is considered throughout the product development process.

Build a Training Plan for UX Designers and Researchers

UX designers and researchers play a critical role in ensuring that digital products are accessible to users with disabilities. They are responsible for creating designs that are easy to use and understand for everyone, including those with different abilities. By providing them with accessibility training, they can learn how to design and conduct research that is inclusive of all users.

Here are some details on building an accessibility training plan for UX Designers and Researchers.

Define topics to Cover
The training plan for UX designers and researchers should cover a variety of topics, such as:
- Understanding the different types of disabilities and how they can affect users' interactions with digital products
- Designing for accessibility and inclusive design principles
- Conducting usability testing with users with disabilities
- Understanding assistive technology and how it can impact the user experience
- Evaluating accessibility using automated and manual testing tools
- Creating accessible documentation and training materials

Define Format/Method of Delivery
The training should be delivered in a way that is engaging and interactive, such as hands-on workshops, online courses, or live webinars. It should also be tailored to the specific needs and skill levels of the participants. For example, if the team already has a good understanding of accessibility basics, the training can focus on more advanced topics.

Define Communication Frequency
It is recommended to conduct training sessions on a regular basis to ensure that the team stays up-to-date with the latest accessibility guidelines and best practices. The frequency of training sessions can vary depending on the size of the team and the level of expertise.

Define Outcomes of the Training Plan
The goal of the training plan is to equip UX designers and researchers with the knowledge and skills needed to create accessible digital products that can be used by everyone, regardless of their abilities. The outcome of the training should be a team that is aware of accessibility challenges, and is capable of designing and testing products that are accessible and inclusive to all users. This can result in increased user satisfaction, higher product adoption rates, and a more positive reputation for the organization as a whole.

Build a Training Plan for Developers & Testers

Developers and testers play a crucial role in ensuring that digital products and services are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. They are responsible for implementing accessibility features and testing for accessibility issues throughout the development process. By providing developers and testers with the necessary knowledge and skills, the training plan can help ensure that accessible digital products.

Here are some details on building an accessibility training plan for Developers & Testers.

Define topics to cover
The training plan for developers and testers should cover the following topics:
- Overview of accessibility and disability types
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 standards
- Assistive technologies and how they interact with digital products
- Techniques for making code accessible, such as semantic HTML, ARIA, and keyboard navigation
- Accessibility testing tools and methodologies
- How to fix accessibility issues and make improvements

Define format or method of delivery
The training can be delivered through a combination of methods, including online courses, instructor-led workshops, interactive exercises, and real-world examples. The format should be designed to cater to different learning styles and be accessible to all participants.

Define frequency of communication
The training plan should be delivered on an ongoing basis, especially as new accessibility standards and best practices emerge. Refresher courses and updates should be provided regularly to ensure that developers and testers are up to date with the latest accessibility guidelines and techniques.

Define outcomes of the training plan
The main outcomes of the accessibility training plan for developers and testers should be:
- Improved understanding of accessibility standards and best practices
- Ability to implement accessibility features and make code accessible
- Increased proficiency in using accessibility testing tools and methodologies
- Ability to identify and fix accessibility issues
- Improved collaboration with other team members on accessibility initiatives