



WHITEPAPER

Your Local Government's Guide to Meeting Website Accessibility and Compliance Requirements

Timeline for Compliance

Relative to all non-procured ICT, federal agencies and contractors must comply with the updated 508 Standards beginning on January 18, 2018. Until January 18, municipalities should continue to adhere to the original 508 Standards.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

While your top priority is undoubtedly the equitable access of content by all your citizens, it's important to understand that local governments that fail to comply with 508 Standards could face a financial penalty.

Hot to Determine if your Civic Website is Compliant with Section 508?

The most frequently asked question around compliance is "how do I know I am compliant?" or "How do I measure compliance?"

The Department of Justice and the ADA have stood behind guidelines for WCAG 2.0 but clarity in how it is measured has been elusive.

There are many tools you can purchase to assess website compliance with varying results. A good first step is to use one of the available free tools. Many web browsers including Google Chrome have a free screen reader that can read your site, which will point out areas that aren't accessible to those with visual impairments.

There are other free, online web-based tools, such as the WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool, which will quickly assess errors

and issues on your website. The WAVE tool is easy to use and assesses a page in seconds. Be wary, however, of scanning tools that overestimate the number of errors and try to sell you a remediation subscription.

Ongoing Municipal Compliance

Compliance is a continuum; however, it is important to understand that websites constantly exist in a state of being degrees of compliant. To ensure your municipality puts forth its best effort to comply with the latest Section 508 and ADA requirements on an ongoing basis, designate an internal resource to digital compliance management and follow these best practices:

- **Build** – Build an initial civic website with the help of a website design expert with expertise in local government website design and that has proven experience in designing from WCAG Levels A and AA.
- **Train** – Ensure everyone on your team responsible for updating your civic website has been trained on the latest requirements, and on how to use the tools and features of your CMS to meet accessibility standards. Your website design provider should assist with initial and ongoing training.
- **Ask your CMS Provider About the Frequency of its Code-Base Updates** – As regulations and technologies change, your CMS should evolve for ongoing compliance. Ask any website designer and CMS provider you may work with how frequently they update their code-base. If the answer is "not at all," or "not frequently," seek out an alternate provider that will help you remain compliant.



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