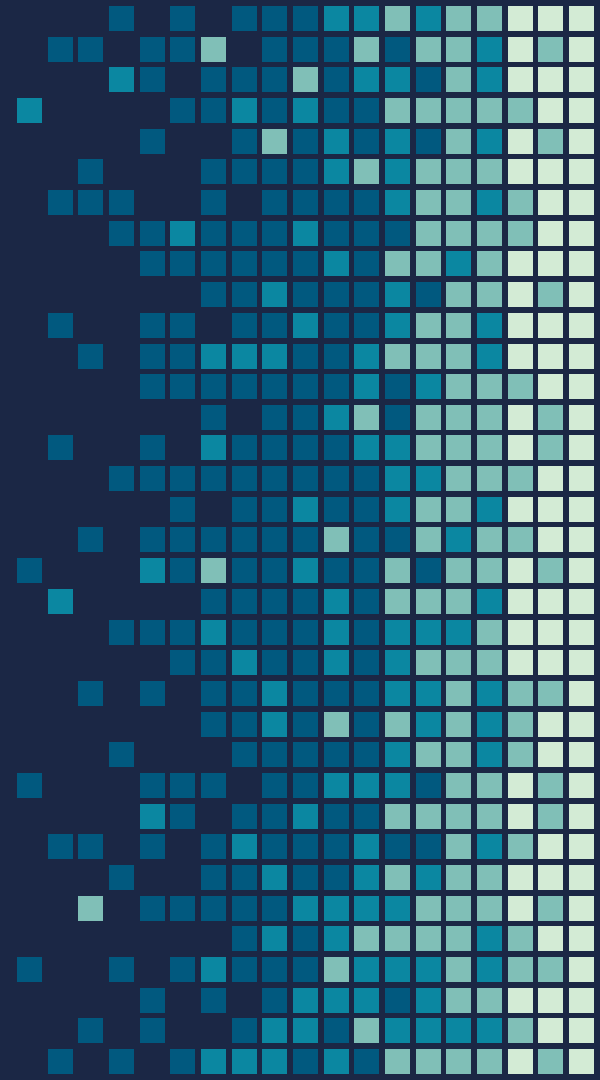# 4 Things You Should Know About Digital Accessibility

Why care about digital accessibility?

An effective website.

It's something organizations strive for.

You pour time, money and resources into creating the ideal blend of design, content and functionality. One that showcases your brand and organization to the world.

But what if a large part of the world can't access it?
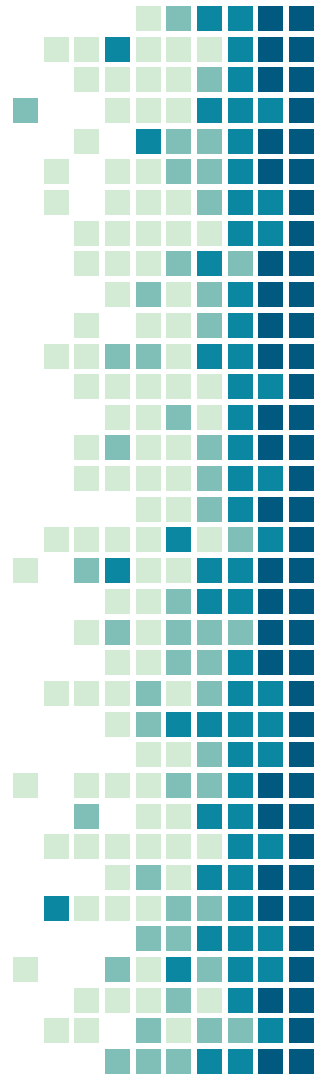
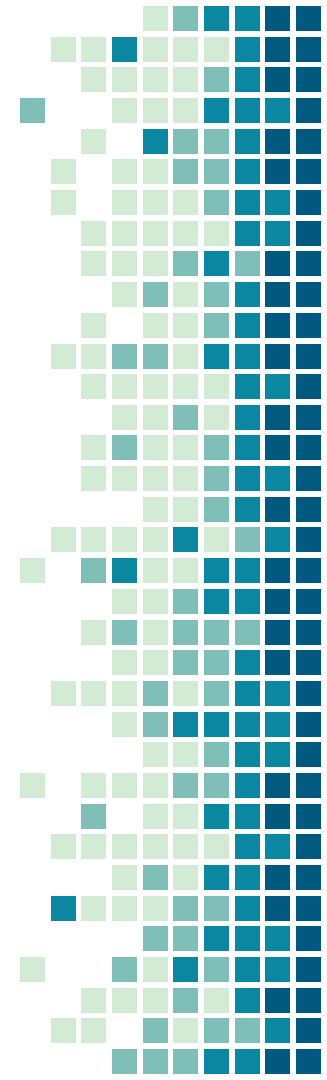According to the US Census Bureau, about

56.7 million

Americans, or

19 percent

of the population had a disability in 2010.

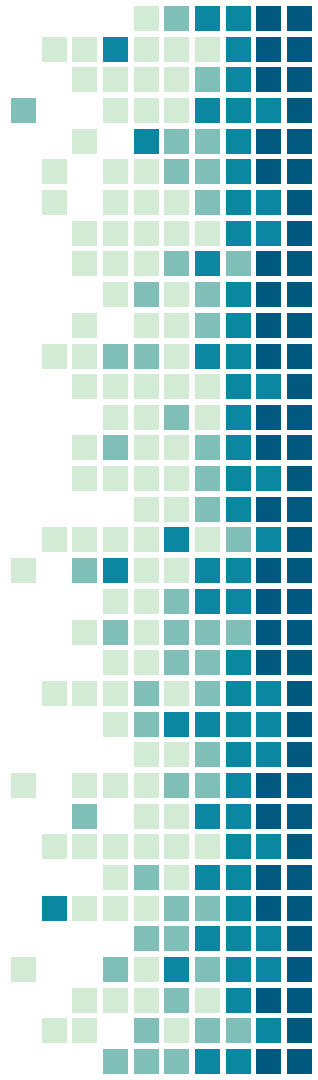That's a large audience you might be missing.

There's a good chance some of these individuals need to access information on your website, including online documents.

Making sure they can access the information they need is important for two fundamental reasons.

It's the right thing to do.

It's also the legal thing to do.

Section 508, WCAG 2.0 and ADA

- These are the guidelines and regulations that drive website accessibility.

- The regulations state that your website content and online documents must be accessible to everyone, regardless of disability.

To make this happen, there are some important things you need to know.

1.

Website accessibility doesn't automatically mean document accessibility.
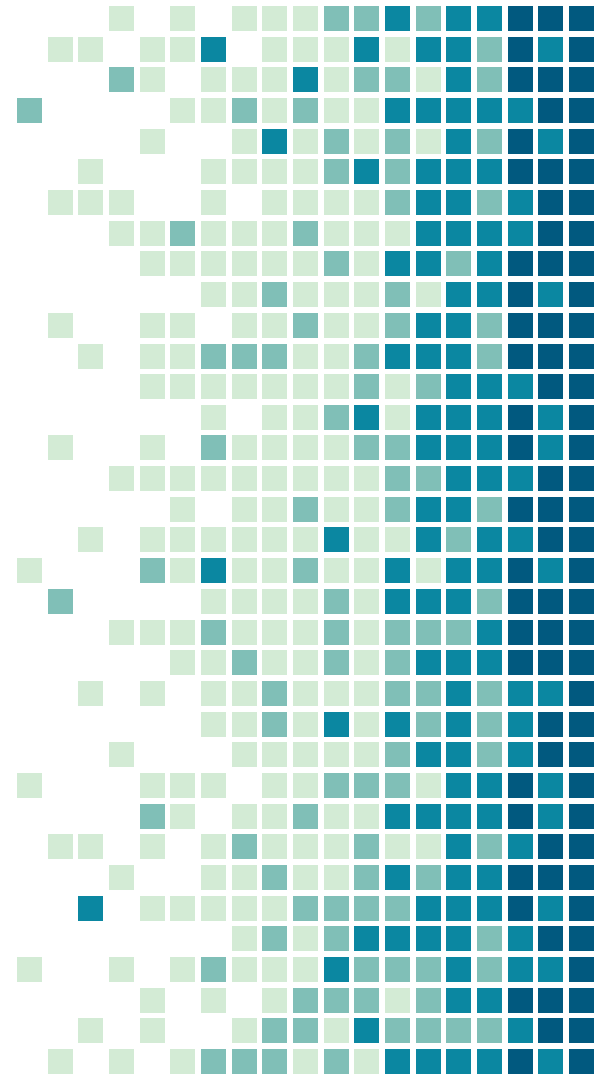
Optimizing your website

To meet accessibility guidelines, website optimization is important for your organization. But, if you haven't included your online documents, then your site isn't fully accessible or compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA standards or ADA regulations.

Most accessible website developers don't include accessible document conversion. These two distinctly different skill sets and services don't typically overlap. You need to be aware of this and make sure you address everything in your accessibility efforts.
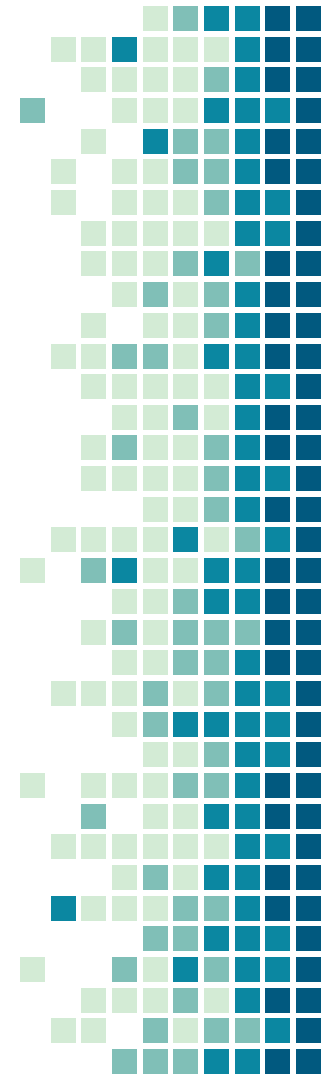
What website content do you need to include?

The answer is simple. All of it.

This includes content such as coupons, billing and financial statements, contracts, applications and instruction manuals, just to name a few.
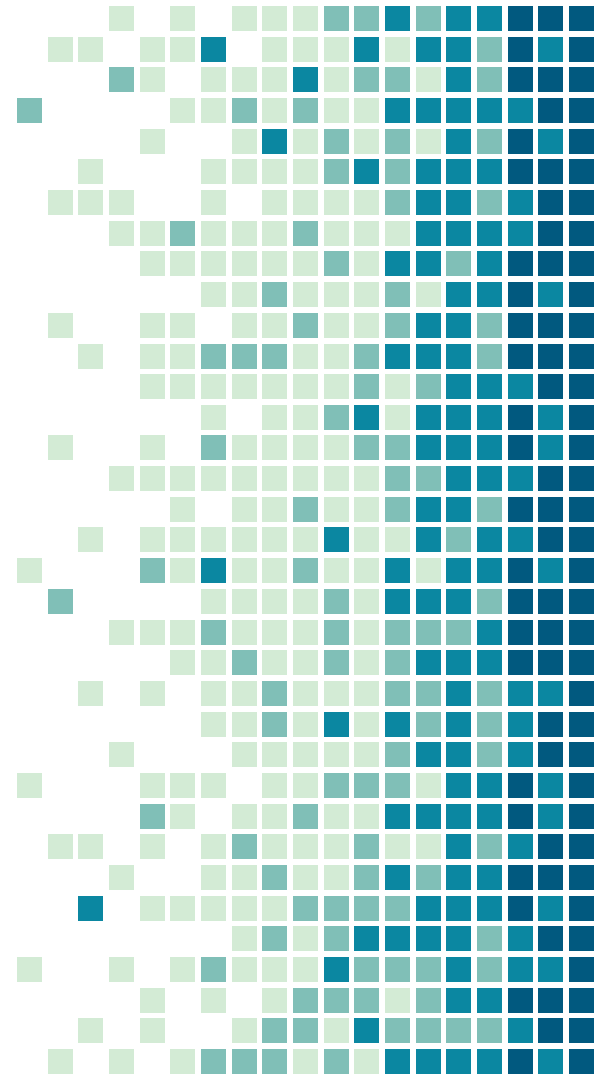
Failing to do this leaves your organization vulnerable to **complaints** or even costly **litigation**. You also face a potential hit to your brand and reputation.
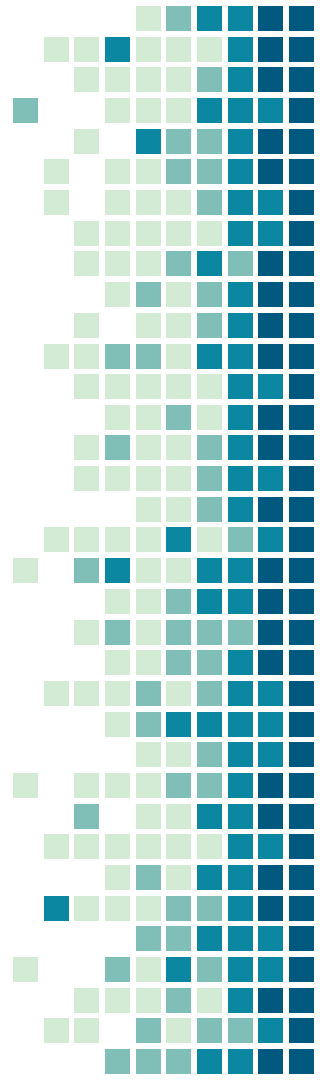
2.

Being proactive is better than being reactive.

The problem with waiting

Most people would agree that getting auto insurance only after you've been in an accident probably isn't the best idea. Neither is getting a check-up with your doctor only after you've faced a major health issue.

With many things in life, being proactive is always better than being reactive. Website and document accessibility is the same way. You don't want to realize and address the problem only after you're neck deep in it and scrambling for a solution.
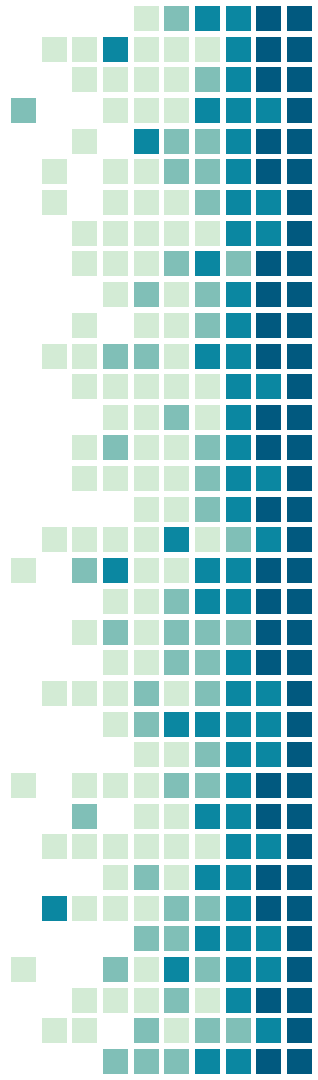
By providing digital accessibility proactively, you're not only doing the right thing for your employees and customers, you're also protecting your organization from the possible negative consequences of inaccessible online content and documents.
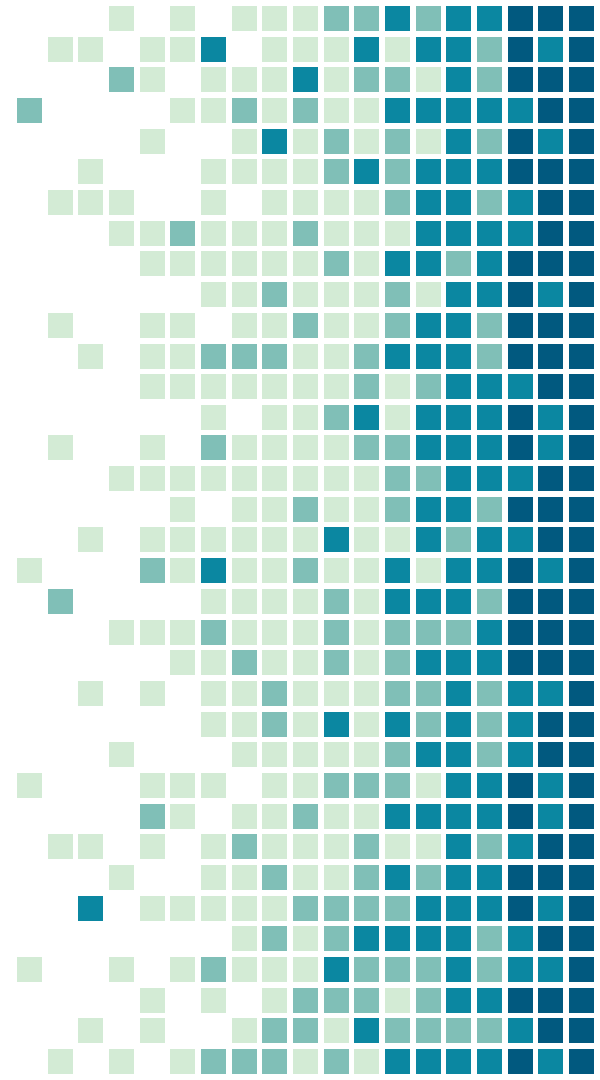
Not sure?

If you're still not sure if this is something you should be worried about right now, take a look at this accessibility litigation article and consider if a reactive approach is the right plan of action for your organization.
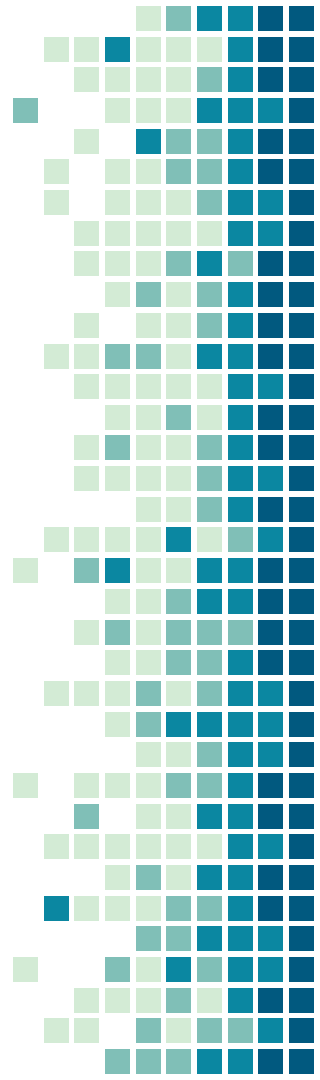
3.

Not all documents are created equal.

Not all PDF documents are the same when it comes to accessibility.

Some require more complex remediation than others, particularly those with tables, financial ledgers, complex graphics or images.

Manual conversion

Manual conversion, especially for complex documents, can be a frustrating and time-consuming process.

You need significant knowledge about this process to successfully turn a complicated PDF file into accessible content.

In fact, it could take months of practice for an inexperienced person to feel comfortable with the different steps and nuances of document conversion.
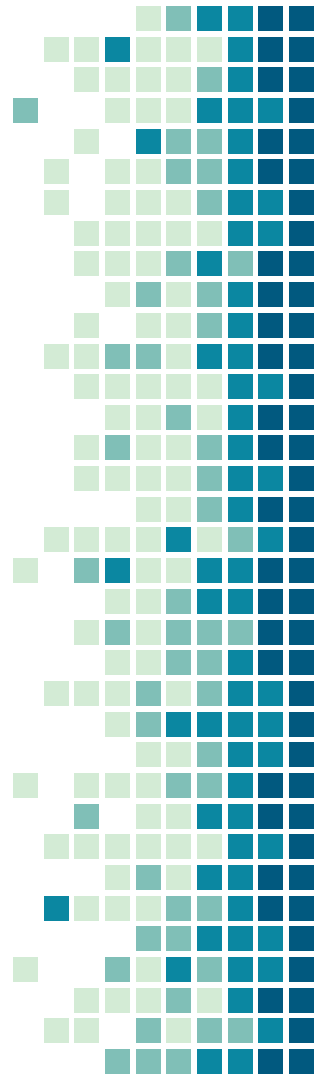
Legacy PDF content

A backlog of PDF content can create an immense workload, especially if you're also creating new content. You might not know where to start if you have hundreds or even thousands of PDF documents to convert.

There are conversion technologies that will help your team address this backlog. There are also conversion services that can handle the work for you.
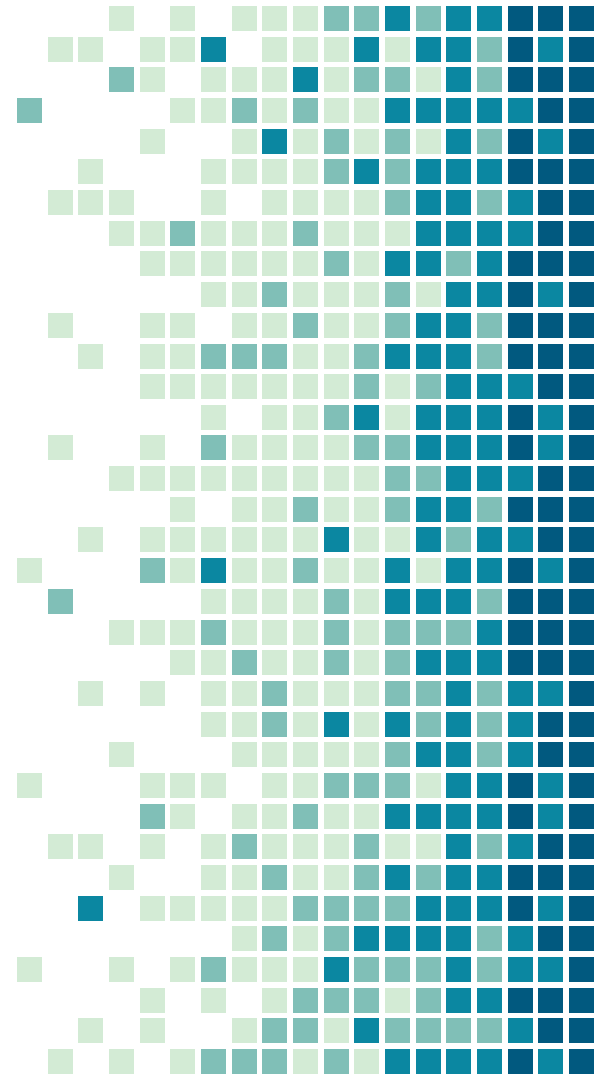
It's important to find the right solution for your organization depending on your budget, timeline and available resources.
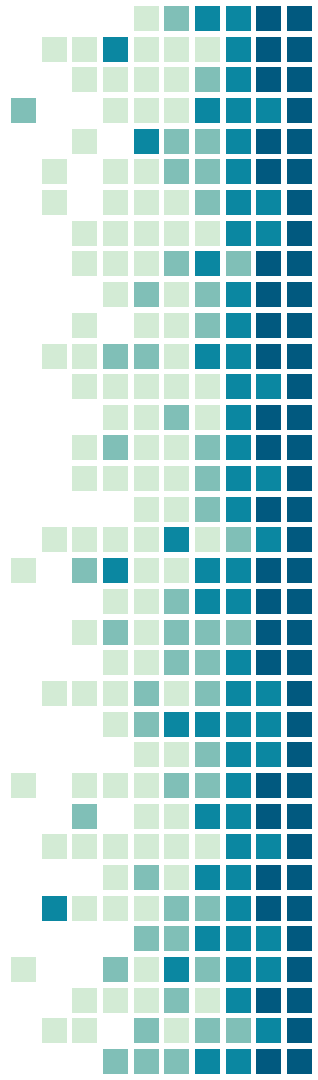
4.

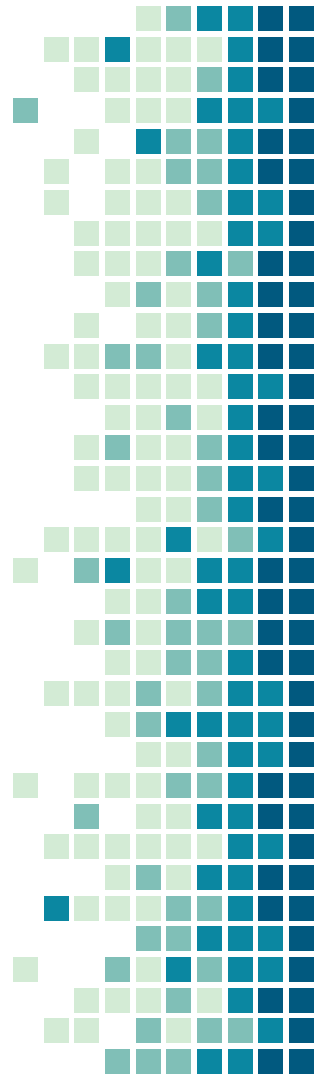# Digital accessibility and compliance isn't "set it and forget it."

An ongoing challenge

When you finally invest the time, effort and resources into making your organization's online content accessible, it's important to realize that accessibility is an ongoing challenge.

Just because your website content and documents are accessible and compliant, doesn't mean they will stay that way.

There are a couple of factors that come into play that can affect the ongoing accessibility and compliance of your online content.

- You change website content or a document's content, design or formatting and don't check to ensure it is still accessible.

- The rules and regulations for accessibility compliance change or are updated, which can affect the requirements for document accessibility.

It's important to make sure your organization stays up-to-date and diligent with your accessibility efforts to ensure ongoing compliance.
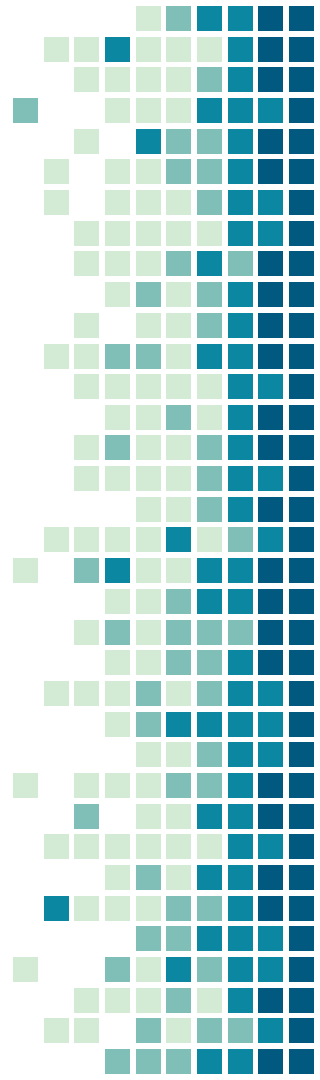
Working with the right digital accessibility partner and conversion technology can make all the difference.

Tackling the challenges of website accessibility and document conversion can be frustrating and time consuming — but it doesn't have to be.

Outsourcing your document conversion can save time, reduce costs and improve employee workflow so your team can focus on more strategic projects.

If you decide to tackle document conversion in-house, partner with a conversion expert with the experience and proven track record to set your organization up for success.
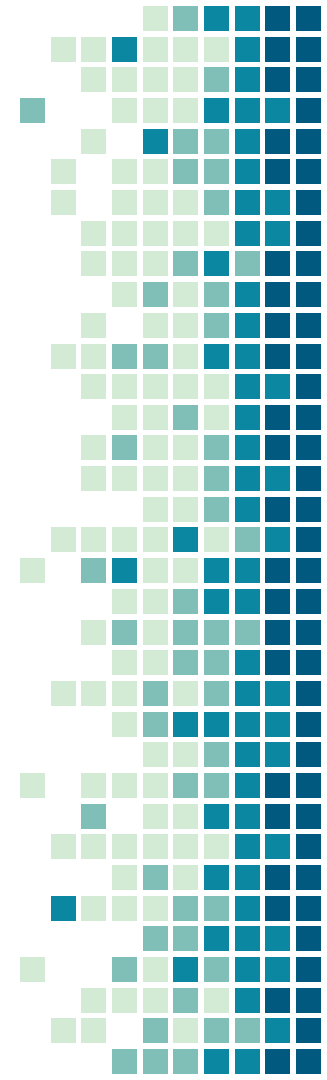
Have questions about digital accessibility?

Need help with your organization's document conversion?

Go to https://equidox.co/ for more information or to speak with one of our accessibility specialists.