



## WCAG 2.1 Level AA Success Criteria

# The importance of Web Accessibility



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## What is Web Accessibility?

Web accessibility refers to making websites usable for people with disabilities. It involves designing and developing websites in a way that people with disabilities, such as those with visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive impairments, can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the website and its content.

Web accessibility ensures that everyone has equal access to information and services on the web, regardless of their abilities. This includes individuals who use assistive technologies, such as screen readers, to access the web.

## The Benefits of Implementing a Web Accessibility Solution

It is important to know that the U.S. government has chosen to promote and support businesses that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). By making your website accessible, your business can be eligible for up to \$5,000 in tax credits.

## The Legal Requirements

The ADA is the Americans with Disabilities Act, an American civil rights law passed in 1990. The law prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places open to the general public. Since 2018, the ADA also covers websites, as they're considered public places of accommodation. That is why making your website accessible is crucial for meeting ADA legal requirements.

It's important to note that the ADA does not specify the criteria for a compliant website, yet today's industry standard is to adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG).

The WCAG is a technical guidebook explaining how websites should look and operate for people with disabilities. So, by following the WCAG guidelines, you are making your website ADA-compliant.

## Why do I need this?

- Making your website inclusive and accessible for everyone will open your business to 15% of the population
- Reaffirm your brand as inclusive

- When you make your website accessible, you optimize the reach of your website with improved performance and increased traffic, and you improve your SEO
- When you make your website accessible, you become compliant with the law
- By making your website accessible, you mitigate the legal and financial risk

## **Why do I need to care about web accessibility?**

- Beyond the ethical responsibility to open your doors to every segment of society, there is now a significant financial risk associated with ignoring this issue. ADA lawsuits are time-consuming, stressful, and costly. The flip side of this issue is that a business opportunity is embedded within making your website accessible. People with disabilities and their families comprise an \$8T market that you immediately tap into. Making your website accessible increases your traffic and improves your performance, and allows you to add a layer of competitive advantage over almost all your competitors.
- In addition, accessible websites enjoy increased traffic, reduced bounce rates, improved SEO rankings, and better conversion rates

## **Why now?**

The legislative landscape has changed. Litigation over web accessibility shows no sign of slowing down. In fact, the numbers show a rise in state court lawsuits for digital accessibility. 2022 broke the record for ADA lawsuits and demand letters; 3,250 lawsuits were filed, representing only 3% of demand letters, as 97% are settled before trial. This means that more than 100,00 business owners received demand letters in 2022 for having inaccessible websites. The consequences are significant - settlements can cost \$10K - 35K, then add legal fees. After this consideration, \$600 a year reduces the cost to offset the risk of a \$20,000 lawsuit, expensive legal fees, stressful litigation process, and the reputational damage associated with being accused of excluding the community of people with disabilities.

## **Why haven't I heard about it before?**

Legislation and the resulting litigation are relatively new phenomena, so most business owners are unaware of the requirement to make their websites accessible to people with disabilities.

## **It's too expensive for me at the moment**

The web accessibility trend is growing exponentially, and doing nothing in the face of this is no longer an option. Pragmatic solutions must be evaluated to mitigate the risk that all website owners face now. The average settlement is around \$30,000. It's time to take action in order to manage the risk instead of ignoring this growing threat and waiting for a crisis to emerge. It is also essential to know that the accessibility tax credit is a game-changer for budget-conscious businesses and effectively reduces the cost of accessibility expenditure by anywhere from 20% to 50%. Watch this short video to learn more about the tax credit and run it by your tax professional before submitting it with your tax returns.

## **Government Resources on ADA Compliance:**

**Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA**

<https://www.ada.gov/resources/web-guidance/>

**Americans with Disabilities Act Title III Regulations**

<https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/title-iii-regulations/>

JL2 Designs will bring your site into compliance with all the ADA regulations, protecting you from future litigation and attorney's fees. Contact us today for a quote.

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