

MAKING WEB-BASED JOB APPLICATION FORMS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL USERS

Why Address Accessibility?

More frequently than not, online job applications have become the main platform to facilitate the employment recruitment process for both employers and jobseekers. Web-based recruitment systems have made it possible for many job seekers to find and apply for jobs more easily and quickly by simply completing web-based applications or registering online; and employers are able to systematically retrieve and evaluate candidate information from the system they have in place.

At the same time, accessibility barriers in some online application processes make it difficult for qualified applicants with disabilities to connect with job opportunities.

How do you know that your online recruitment process is accessible to all qualified applicants or users?

Key Accessibility Best Practices for Design

- Include alternative text for non-text content such as pictures or images.
- Utilize meaningful document structure such as headings and lists.
- Mark up data tables with headings and associate cell content with the headers.
- Ensure that all form elements have labels and that the labels are associated with the correct form element.

- Use concise, meaningful text for links so that links make sense out of context.
- Add captions to all multimedia elements; if not possible, provide a text transcript.
- When links to documents such as PDFs or MS Word Docs are provided, make sure those documents are accessible as well.
- If a scanned document is used, be sure it is readable text and not just an image of text. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software can often convert images of text to readable text.
- Allow users to skip repetitive elements on the page.
- Do not rely on color alone to convey information.
- Make sure content is clearly written and easy to read.
- Care should be taken early in the website development process if using Java script; Java script can create accessibility challenges.

Key Considerations for Accessible Web Form Application Process

Typical composition tools are not adequate to ensure accessibility. A grammar checker will tell you if the words should be used together, but will never tell you whether your meaning is clear. Human judgment is critical.

Test or evaluate your website accessibility

You may use one of the following programs to evaluate accessibility issues in a particular website program and design:

- WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (<http://wave.webaim.org/>): Freely available tool to support testing accessibility from WebAIM.

- WAVE Toolbar (<http://wave.webaim.org/extension/>): Because no data is sent to WAVE server, can be used to evaluate content that is password protected, dynamically generated or scripted, or on an intranet.
- Other Tools: W3C Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools List (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/>)

Evaluate form accessibility and usability

- Check to make sure all necessary instructions and cues are provided.
- Check that form controls are associated with a label element.
- Check that groups of checkboxes and radio buttons are associated using field set and legend.
- Check that the form can be completed and submitted with a keyboard only.
- When tabbing through the form, make sure the navigation order is logical and consistent with the visual order of the form.
- Check that error recovery is functional after form validation.
- Alert the user to the presence of the error in an obvious and accessible manner.
- Allow the user to easily access the form controls that need to be modified.
- If certain form fields are required, the field should be labeled accordingly, and configured to alert the screen reader.
- After submitting the form, user will need to be alerted to submission confirmation and any submission errors.
- Allow resubmission and revalidation of the form (<http://webaim.org/techniques/formvalidation/>).

- The use of CAPTCHA is inaccessible and should not be used to validate submissions.
- Use tables for tabular data, not for layout because tables add additional verbosity to screen reader users.
- Use of ARIA roles and landmarks to enhance the ability of screen reader users to navigate and interact with content.
- Make dynamic content accessible
(<https://webaccess.berkeley.edu/resources/tips/web-accessibility>).

Test with a Screen Reader

Screen reader users navigate using functions that are more sophisticated than just reading the page. Testing with a screen reader can be useful to get a sense for how navigation, forms, and dynamic content are working.

WebAIM Tutorials on Testing with Screen Readers:

- JAWS (<http://webaim.org/articles/jaws/>)
- NVDA (<http://webaim.org/articles/nvda/>)
- VoiceOver (<http://webaim.org/articles/voiceover/>)
- Screen Reader Q&A
(http://webaim.org/articles/screenreader_testing/)

Evaluate features on your site that create potential barriers for people with various disabilities

Type of Disability	Evaluate for:
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlabeled graphics • Video without description • Poorly marked-up tables or frames • Lack of keyboard support or screen reader compatibility
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of captioning for videos • Lack of transcripts for audio content
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content that is mouse-dependent, lacks keyboard access • Lack of support for menu commands
Cognitive or Neurological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistent navigation structure • Overly complex presentation or language • Lack of illustrative non-text materials • Flickering or strobing designs on pages

Conduct User Experience Testing

As with all usability testing, it is important to include a wide enough scope of users, to be clear about expectations, and to measure task performance rather than user skills.

The best approach is to make sure your usability design team includes disability expertise to ensure the validity of your evaluations.

About Our Organization

Northwest ADA Center provides technical assistance, information, and training regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act. Information is provided from the regional office in Washington State and affiliates in Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon. Specialists are available to answer specific questions pertaining to all titles of the ADA and accessibility of the built environment. Training staff offer presentations to businesses, organizations, schools, people with disabilities, and the general public.

Northwest ADA Center

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Alternate formats available upon request.