

CareerWise Digital Accessibility Guidebook

Purpose

This guidebook provides CareerWise staff with essential practices for creating accessible external-facing materials. Following these guidelines ensures everyone (apprentices, partners, employers, and the community) can engage with CareerWise resources. See the full CareerWise Accessibility Policy [here](#).

Accessibility is not just a legal requirement (WCAG 2.2 AA is required in Colorado and federally); it's about equity, inclusion, and professionalism. What helps people with disabilities also improves clarity and usability for everyone.

Why Accessibility Matters

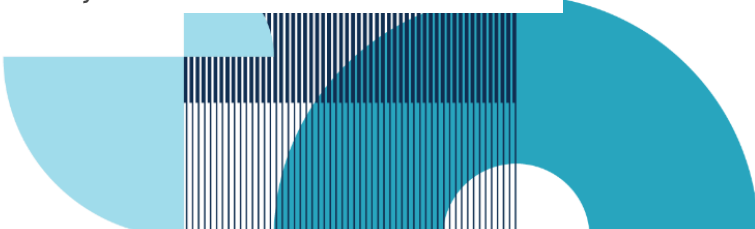
Legal Compliance WCAG 2.2 Level AA compliance is required by national and Colorado law (Colorado House Bill 21-1110 by July 2025). Non-compliance can lead to significant penalties, including fines of \$3,500 per incident in Colorado.

Inclusive Impact 26% of US adults have disabilities. Accessible design removes barriers and ensures everyone can engage with our content.

Universal Design Features like clear navigation and high contrast improve usability for all users, not just those with disabilities.

What is WCAG 2.2?

WCAG 2.2 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) is a set of technical standards that ensure digital content is accessible to people with disabilities. CareerWise partners are expected to meet WCAG 2.2 Level AA across all external-facing digital and print assets. These guidelines focus on making content perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (POUR). Following them helps remove barriers and improves usability for everyone.

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Source

WCAG 2.2 Four Principles (POUR)

Perceivable	Content must be presented in ways users can perceive through sight, sound, or touch. Add alternative (alt) text for images, ensure sufficient color contrast, and provide captions for videos.
Operable	Users must be able to navigate and interact with content. Ensure keyboard accessibility, avoid flashing elements, and provide clear navigation paths.
Understandable	Content should be easy to read and predict. Use simple language, maintain consistent navigation, and provide clear error messages and instructions.
Robust	Content must work reliably with current and future technologies. Use valid HTML and ensure compatibility with assistive technologies across platforms.

Writing Guidelines

- Use plain language: short sentences, active voice, everyday words.
 - Define acronyms and technical terms on first use.
 - Organize with clear headings and logical flow. Use bullet points and numbered lists to break up information and improve scannability.
 - Use inclusive language: gender-neutral terms, respectful phrasing, and avoid stereotypes and deficit framing.
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Practical Digital Accessibility Guidelines

Document Accessibility Checklist (Word, Google Docs, PDFs, etc.)

- Use proper headings** - Apply built-in heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2) instead of just making text bigger or bold. This creates a clear document structure for screen readers.
- Add alternative (alt) text to images** - Right-click images and add descriptive alt text. Write what's important about the image, not just "photo." Mark decorative images as such.
- Check color contrast** - Use dark text on light backgrounds or light text on dark backgrounds. Maintain at least 4.5:1 contrast ratio. Don't rely on color alone to convey information.
- Keep tables simple** - Use tables only for data, not layout. Include header rows and avoid merged cells. Keep structure straightforward for screen reader navigation.
- Run accessibility checker** - Use built-in tools in Microsoft Office (Review > Check Accessibility) or Google Workspace add-ons such as Grackle Docs before sharing.

Presentation Accessibility Checklist (PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.)

- Add clear titles to every slide** - Give each slide a short, descriptive title so screen reader users can navigate easily and everyone knows what the slide covers.
- Use simple fonts like Arial (minimum 18 pt)** - Choose clean, readable fonts and keep text large enough for people viewing from a distance or on small screens.
- Check color contrast** - Use dark text on light backgrounds or light text on dark backgrounds. Maintain at least 4.5:1 contrast ratio. Don't rely on color alone to convey information.
- Limit text per slide** - Follow the 6x6 rule. Use no more than 6 lines per slide and 6 words per line to keep content scannable and focused.
- Align text to the left** - Left-aligned text is easier to follow for everyone, especially people with dyslexia or cognitive disabilities.

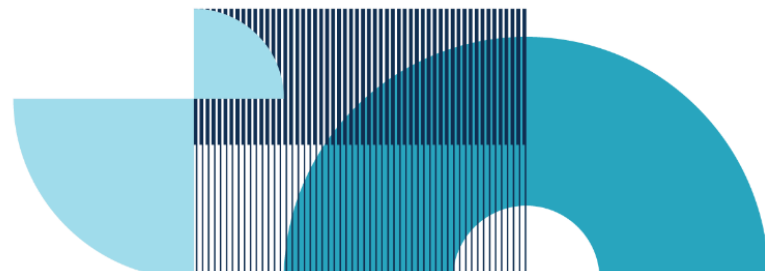
- Add alternative (alt) text to images** - Right-click images and add descriptive alt text. Write what's important about the image, not just "photo." Mark decorative images as such.
- Describe visuals when presenting** - Verbally summarize key points from charts or images ("This chart shows a steady increase in apprentice enrollment over three years.").
- Provide captions for videos** - Include accurate captions so people who are deaf or hard of hearing can access the information.
- Test keyboard navigation** - Make sure slides and embedded media can be navigated using only a keyboard (Tab, Enter, Arrow keys).
- Use logical tab order** - Check that focus moves through the slide in a natural reading order—title, main text, then images or charts.

Web Content Checklist

- Consistent Layouts** - Keep navigation menus and buttons in the same locations across pages. Use consistent heading styles and formatting throughout your site.
- Descriptive Links** - Write clear link text like "Download Accessibility Checklist" instead of "click here." Links should make sense without surrounding context.
- Clear Form Labels** - Add visible labels above or beside each form field. Be specific with labels like "First Name" and mark required fields clearly.
- Keyboard Navigation** - Test that all interactive elements can be reached using only Tab, Enter, and Arrow keys. Ensure visible focus indicators show the current location.

Helpful Tools

- Microsoft Office** Most Microsoft applications have a built-in "Check Accessibility" feature under the "Review" tab. This can find issues with headings, alt text, contrast, and more.
- Google Workspace** While Google's built-in checkers are more basic, you can use add-ons like Grackle Docs to get more detailed accessibility checks directly within these applications. Learn more about Grackle Docs [here](#).



Color Contrast Analyzer

Tools like WebAIM Contrast Checker help you make sure your text and background colors are easy to read. This is crucial for readability. Use this tool by clicking [here](#).

WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool

This is a free online tool and browser extension that quickly checks websites and online content for accessibility issues. It highlights errors, alerts, and features that improve accessibility. Get the extension by clicking [here](#).

Screen Readers

While not a “checker,” using a screen reader yourself, even for a short time, can give you a powerful understanding of how people with visual impairments experience your content. NVDA is a free screen reader for Windows; VoiceOver is built into Apple devices. Download the NVDA screen reader by clicking [here](#).

Keyboard Navigation

Simply testing your digital content (documents, websites, presentations) using only your keyboard (Tab, Shift+Tab, Enter, Arrow keys) helps identify if all interactive elements are accessible without a mouse.

Colorado Plain Language Guidelines

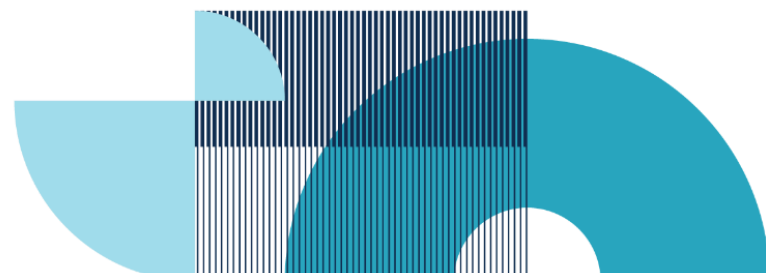
Learn more about Colorado guidelines by clicking [here](#).

Grammarly

Identifies and corrects passive voice and overly complex language; install Grammarly for free by clicking [here](#).

Key Resources**Introduction to Web Accessibility**

Click [here](#) to learn more about accessibility from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3), a global organization that develops standards and guidelines to make the web accessible to everyone, especially people with disabilities.



- WebAIM** WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind) is a fantastic resource with articles, checklists, and tools. It explains WCAG guidelines in plain language and offers practical advice. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- WCAG 2.2 Checklist with Filters and Links** Get clear, practical steps to make sure your content meets accessibility standards by clicking [here](#). It's a quick checklist to catch common issues and create more inclusive documents, slides, and web pages.
- Section 508** Click [here](#) to learn more about how to create accessible digital products.
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Hosting Accessible Virtual Events

When hosting virtual workshops or meetings, plan ahead so everyone can participate equally, whether they use assistive technology, need captions, or require more time to process information.

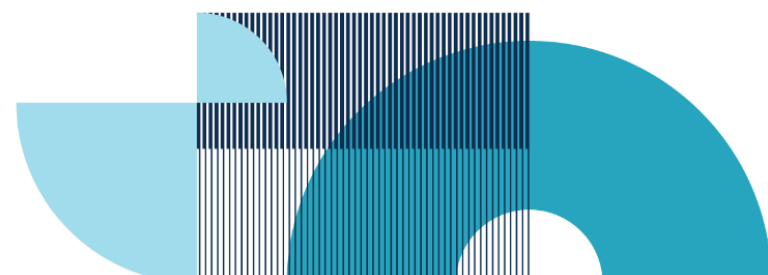
Common Barriers and Best Practices

Use these best practices to help ensure people with different types of disabilities can fully participate in your virtual session.

Visual Disabilities

- Provide materials (slides, handouts) in accessible formats before the session.
- Describe visuals aloud (charts, images, raised hands in polls).
- Ensure high color contrast and readable fonts on shared screens.
- Confirm the platform works with screen readers and keyboard navigation.

Cognitive, Learning, or Neurological Disabilities

- Use clear, simple language and structured agendas.
 - Avoid flashing or fast-moving visuals that may trigger photosensitivity.
 - Give extra time for responses or activities.
 - Record sessions and share summaries or transcripts for review.
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Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Turn on accurate live captions.
- Encourage speakers to face the camera, speak clearly and slowly, and avoid talking over one another.
- Share key points or questions in chat as well as verbally.

Physical or Motor Disabilities

- Ensure all meeting features (chat, reactions, polls) can be used via keyboard or assistive devices.
- Avoid requiring mouse-only actions.
- Allow camera-off participation to reduce fatigue and bandwidth demands.

Speech Disabilities

- Use chat and collaborative documents for participation and questions.
- Do not require verbal introductions or responses if typing is easier.
- Encourage inclusive facilitation and acknowledge all contributions equally.

Additional Tips

- Test your platform's accessibility features before the event.
- Record, caption, and share recordings after the session.
- Assign an accessibility point person to monitor chat or troubleshoot issues live.

Virtual Accessibility Notice

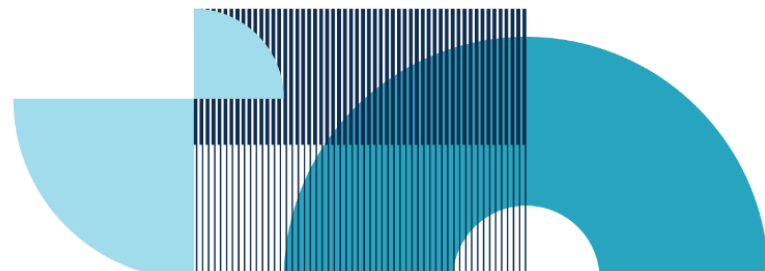
Include the following notice in your virtual session confirmation email.

"We are committed to making this session accessible to all participants. If you require any accommodations, such as captions or materials in an alternate format, please contact us by [insert date] so we can make the necessary arrangements."

Virtual Accessibility Statement

Use the following statement to express CareerWise's commitment to inclusion and outline key accessibility features at the beginning of virtual sessions.

"Welcome! We are committed to making this meeting inclusive and accessible for everyone. For our meeting, we are providing:



- Live captions
- Meeting materials in advance (ensure all participants received the materials)
- High-contrast visuals, large text, and clear images

“To report accessibility issues during our session, please use the chat feature to contact the meeting organizer, or use the “Raise Hand” feature.” (Ensure participants understand how to use these features.)

More Information

Learn more about how to host accessible virtual sessions at the links below.

Zoom Click [here](#) to learn about Zoom accessibility.

Google Meet Click [here](#) to learn about accessibility in Google Meet.

WCAG Click [here](#) to learn more about how to make virtual meetings accessible.

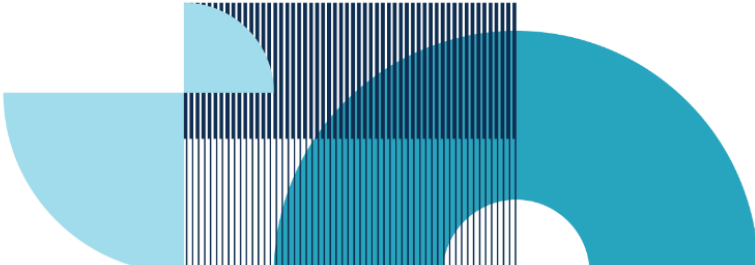
Expectations and Support

- Compliance: All external-facing partner assets must meet WCAG 2.2 AA.
 - Before publishing or sharing external-facing assets, complete the CareerWise Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Design Checklist, which you can find [here](#).
 - CareerWise will provide training modules and consultation guidance upon request.
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In Summary

Accessibility is not a one-time task. It’s an ongoing commitment. By following this guide, CareerWise partners can create materials that are inclusive, compliant, and effective for all audiences.

If you have additional questions or want more support, reach out to our accessibility team at accessibility@careerwiseusa.org.

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