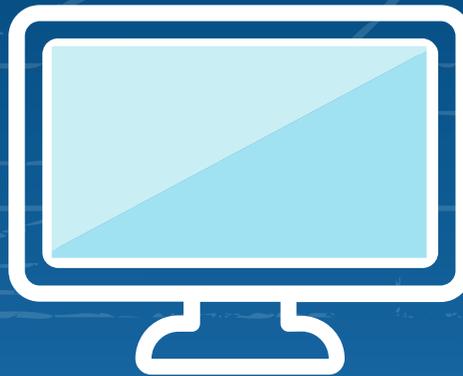


The ADA Compliance **BLUEPRINT**



Building an Accessible Digital Experience

THE ADA BLUEPRINT STARTS HERE

Understanding the Structure of Compliance

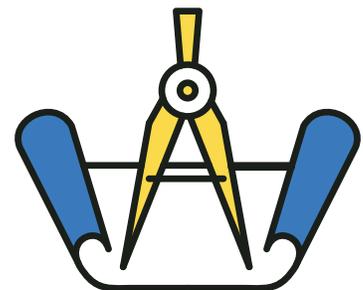


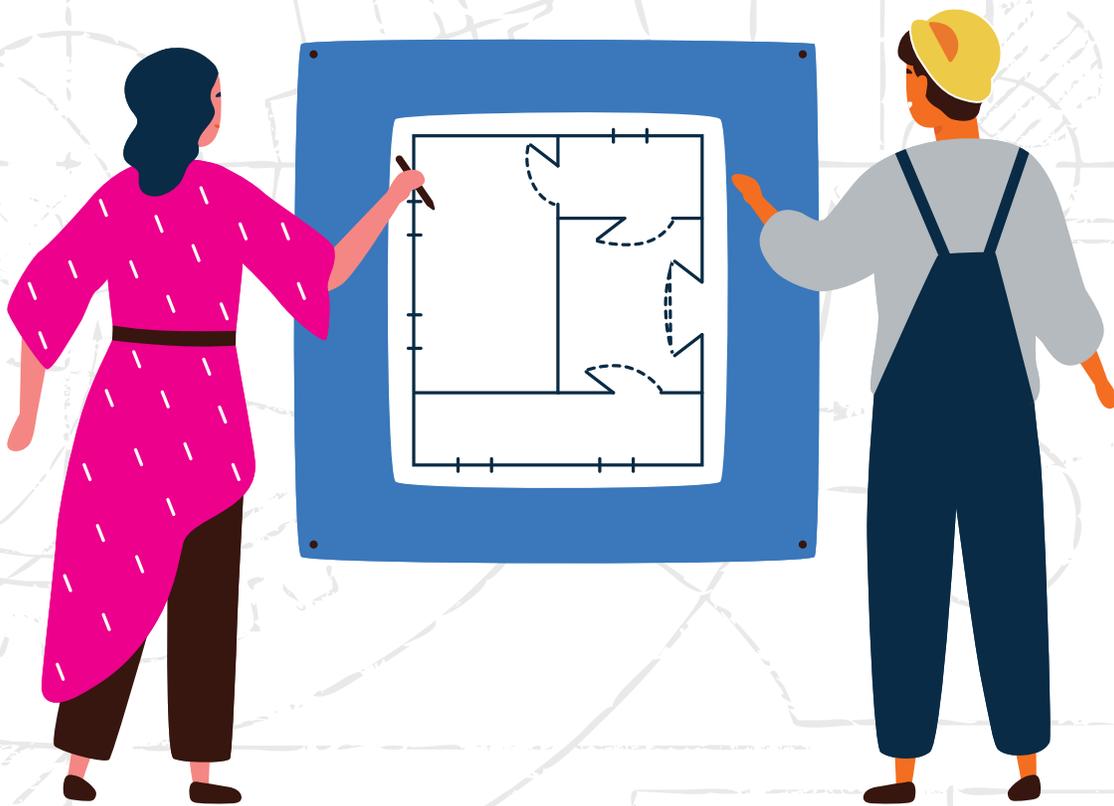
Just as architects rely on blueprints to design functional and inclusive spaces, organizations covered by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) need a structured plan to create digital experiences that meet Title II's accessibility requirements.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK...

Achieving and maintaining ADA Title II compliance for digital resources means:

- Understanding the digital accessibility requirements of ADA Title II and which resources they apply to.
- Reviewing existing digital resources to assess whether they meet requirements and addressing accessibility issues where they don't.
- Ensuring that new digital resources are built with accessibility in mind.
- Adopting the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1 Level AA as a minimum technical accessibility standard.
- Continuously monitoring digital assets for accessibility and taking steps to fix any issues that occur when content or functionality is added or changed.





...NOW LET'S BREAK GROUND

State and local government entities subject to Title II — and their suppliers that support them — must be capable of creating digital resources that meet accessibility requirements and are usable by people with disabilities.

If you work for or supply an organization subject to Title II, this guide serves as your digital accessibility “blueprint” for constructing the necessary frameworks and strategies to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities.



Put on your (digital) hardhats and use this guide to ensure that your services, programs, and activities provided through websites, mobile apps, and digital documents comply with ADA Title II requirements.

UNDERSTANDING ADA TITLE II AND DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Laying the Foundation

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark civil rights law enacted in 1990 to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life. The law is divided into five titles, each covering different aspects of accessibility.

Under Title II, state and local governments — including municipalities, public universities, transit authorities, and other public entities — must ensure that all programs, services, and activities are accessible to people with disabilities. This applies to physical and digital spaces, allowing equal access to public transportation and online services.

However, because the ADA was enacted before web and mobile apps became so fundamental to society, there has long been confusion over whether and how the ADA applies to the digital world.

In 2024, the Department of Justice (DOJ) reinforced that Title II extends to websites, mobile applications, and digital documents when it published updates to the ADA Title II rules **addressing web content and mobile app accessibility**. These requirements are intended to clarify how Title II applies to programs, activities, and services public entities provide through websites and mobile apps.

The requirements are set out in **Subpart H — Web and Mobile Accessibility — of the ADA Title II Regulations**. The DOJ has provided various supporting resources to help covered entities understand and meet the requirements, including an **ADA Title II rule fact sheet** and **compliance guidance for small entities**.



Key Compliance Requirements



- Take steps to ensure services, programs, and activities provided through websites and mobile apps are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.
- Ensure that websites, mobile apps, and digital documents conform to WCAG 2.1 Level AA.
- Meet the appropriate compliance deadline based on the public entity's population size:

April 24, 2026, for entities of 50,000 persons or more, and
April 26, 2027, for smaller entities and special district governments.

By implementing these measures, public entities enable people with disabilities to access critical services provided through digital channels, such as paying taxes, receiving education, participating in public meetings, retrieving public records, or submitting official forms.

Exceptions and Exemptions

The rule provides specific exemptions where meeting requirements would fundamentally alter the program, service, or activity, or cause undue financial or administrative burden to the public entity including:

- Archived web content
- Preexisting digital documents
- Preexisting social media posts made by the covered entity
- Password-protected personal documents
- Content posted voluntarily by a third party (e.g., comments on a web page or in an online discussion forum).

Exempted content is still subject to the broader requirements of ADA Title II, in that public entities still need to take steps to facilitate access to content when requested by a person with a disability.

DESIGNING THE STRATEGY: Creating an Effective Accessibility Plan



ADA Title II requires public entities to meet and maintain digital accessibility over time. A strategic plan is essential to establish structures that support the accessibility of existing resources and create new resources that are born accessible.

For entities with large amounts of web content and many mobile apps, this is work that can't be done by one accessibility expert, so a strategy that distributes responsibility across the organization will be much more effective and sustainable.

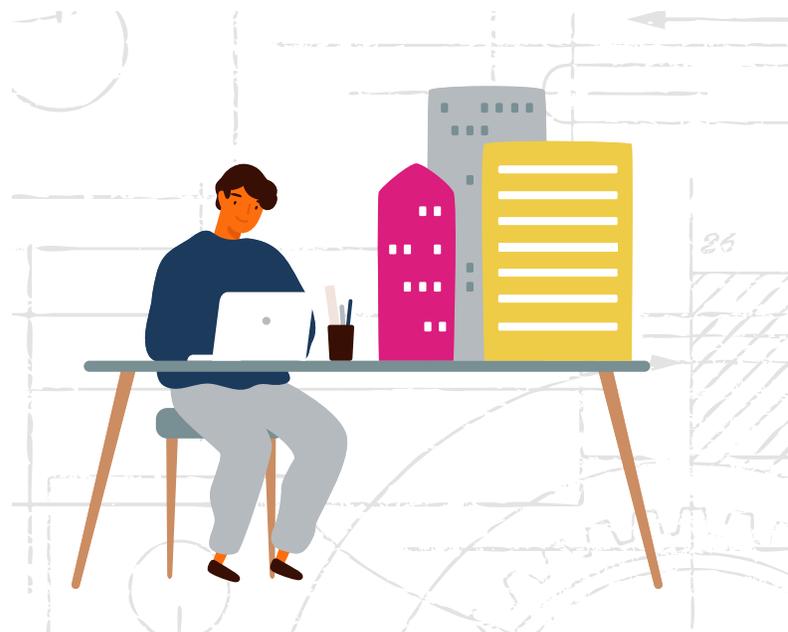
An effective plan focuses on building capacity and taking the steps needed to assess and update digital resources.

Let's explore each component in more detail:

Processes for Ensuring Digital Resources Meet Accessibility Requirements

Meeting the requirements of the ADA Title II rule requires you to address the accessibility of existing web content and mobile apps, as well as those you plan to build. You can tackle these tasks in parallel.

For existing resources, it's best to take a prioritized approach so that you can focus your efforts first on the most significant challenges. The rule has been produced to help guide public entities addressing accessibility where it will have the most significant positive impact.



UNDERSTANDING THE RULES BEFORE YOU BUILD

Before taking any action, it's important to establish the applicable legal obligations for your websites and mobile apps. U.S. public entities are covered by ADA Title II but may also be subject to state or local government laws that provide digital accessibility requirements.



The ADA Title II clearly states that the rule's requirements do not override other applicable laws that may provide more stringent accessibility requirements. Before developing an accessibility strategy, consult legal counsel to ensure you meet your obligations.

Regardless of your legal obligations, following best practices in accessibility and user experience when building websites and mobile apps helps you deliver better services, programs, and activities for people with disabilities and other users.

Step 0: Take Advantage of Processes Already in Place to Meet Broader ADA Requirements

Title II of the ADA requires that all public entities self-assess their programs, activities, and services to identify gaps in provision for people with disabilities. A public entity's self-assessment approach can be extended to cover a more in-depth assessment of digital resources used to provide programs, activities, and services.

Title II also requires larger public entities to establish and follow a Transition Plan to address the issues identified in the self-assessment. Again, this process can be adapted to improve the accessibility of digital resources.

Step 1: Inventory Existing Digital Assets

Find out what websites and mobile apps you have covered by the Title II rule. Websites include the content and functionality provided on web pages, digital documents like PDFs and Word, and multimedia content. Assign a priority to each digital asset in terms of its purpose and frequency of use, considering what you may already know about its accessibility.

Step 2: Evaluate Covered Assets to Establish Conformance Levels

Prioritize your digital resources and evaluate each one accordingly. Depending on the size and purpose of the asset, you may want to focus on a sample of pages or screens of different types. Or when reviewing user task flows, focus on the paths users would take to complete a task.

You can take a mix of approaches:

- Automated accessibility evaluation tools allow you to efficiently scan digital resources and detect potential WCAG conformance issues.
- Manual testing against WCAG 2.1 helps you identify issues that can't be detected automatically.
- Usability testing with people with disabilities helps you understand where barriers hinder or prevent people from finding information and completing tasks.

For each issue you identify, prioritize it based on factors such as the severity of its impact on affected users and the effort required to fix it. When resources and time are limited, this helps you decide what to fix first and what to leave for later.

Step 3: Remediate Assets to Bring Them to Conformance and Allow People with Disabilities to Use Them as Intended

Based on the evaluation results, adopt a prioritized approach to remediating issues. Validate your efforts through further testing and, preferably, usability testing with disabled people.

Step 4: Documenting and Providing Evidence for Exemptions

When you establish that addressing an issue is too technically or logistically challenging, you should consult the ADA Title II rule's definition of exceptions.

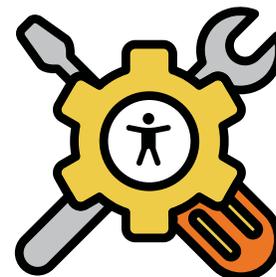
For example, you can demonstrate that addressing the issue would cause undue financial burden or fundamentally alter the digital asset's purpose. You may be able to show that the issue does not have any material impact on people with disabilities.

In such cases, carefully document your decision and the evidence you have to support the decision, along with how you will support disabled users affected by the ongoing existence of the issue.

Processes for Building New Resources and Maintaining Accessibility Over Time

In addition to evaluating existing resources, you must revise development processes to embed accessibility considerations from the earliest stages. This means ensuring accessibility requirements are addressed in:

- Specification and requirements
- Visual and user experience (UX) design
- Development and coding practices
- Content creation, including text, images, and multimedia
- Quality assurance (QA) testing



If you're investing in artificial intelligence (AI) to help build digital content, make sure that AI-generated content and code meet accessibility requirements.

Digital resources are dynamic, so you must have processes to monitor accessibility over time. This might include:

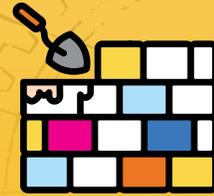
- Running automated accessibility scanning tools that regularly check digital resources for changes in accessibility, flag regressions, and help you identify what needs to be fixed.
- Conducting regular manual accessibility testing of key content and functionality to make sure it is still accessible to disabled people.
- Seeking feedback from people with disabilities and monitoring any reports of inaccessibility.

Exemptions from the Title II digital accessibility requirements don't mean exemptions from the ADA.

You must be ready to respond to any evidence that accessibility levels have dropped, make the necessary fixes, and support affected users while the issues remain unresolved.

Wherever you have content you haven't tested — or claimed exemptions from the Title II rule's technical accessibility requirements — you must provide affected users with equivalent information or functionality in alternative means.

CAPACITY BUILDING: Strengthening the Framework



Accessibility must be approached as an ongoing organizational responsibility, not a one-time project. It equips all stakeholders who create, maintain, and manage digital resources with the knowledge, skills, and infrastructure necessary to support long-term accessibility efforts.

Capacity building is essential to ensuring that your organization has the knowledge, skills, and infrastructure to follow processes set in place to manage digital accessibility, stay ahead of ADA requirements, and provide digital resources that improve program and service quality for people with disabilities.

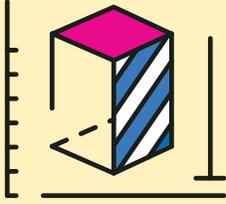
Most public entities will have an ADA Coordinator in place. The ADA Coordinator should play a pivotal role in connecting responsibilities across the organization, including legal counsel/compliance, IT, procurement, publicity and communications, staff development, and engagement with the public.

Bringing digital assets into conformance and maintaining conformance over time can be a significant effort. That's why capacity building is so important.



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Identifying staff who are accountable and responsible for accessibility.

Leadership accountability ensures that accessibility is considered an organizational priority and has top-level support rather than being considered a grassroots effort.



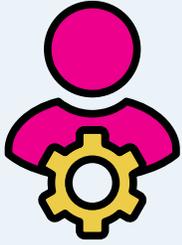
Defining accessibility responsibilities for every role involved in creating, managing, or maintaining digital resources.

This spreads the load, reduces the burden on subject matter experts, and increases the chances that accessibility is addressed earlier in the creation process. It also helps people identify how the tools and processes they use can integrate accessibility seamlessly.



Communicating a shared understanding of the rule's requirements and of the organization's commitment to accessibility.

With a shared understanding, for example, through an accessibility policy, there is less chance that accessibility is interpreted differently across the organization.



Training staff to help them meet their responsibilities.

Accessibility training should be role-specific so that staff can develop the knowledge and skills they need for their job (and not waste time gathering knowledge they don't need) and understand where to go for specialist help.



Investing in tools to support the process of creating and maintaining accessible digital content.

Tools can make building and maintaining accessible digital resources easier and more efficient.



Managing accessibility with suppliers of third-party digital resources, so that suppliers understand their accessibility expectations.

Many digital resources may be built by third parties or internally, but rely on third-party technologies. You may not have complete and direct control over these resources. Yet, if you're a public entity, you're still responsible for accessibility conformance.



Contractual relationships are critical tools for communicating accessibility expectations to suppliers.

Public entities should establish clear accessibility requirements in contracts, collaborate with suppliers to meet those expectations, and have a plan for addressing any accessibility barriers that cannot be avoided.

ADDRESSING COMMON QUESTIONS

About ADA Title II's Rule on Web Content and Mobile Accessibility



What Do We Do When We Can't Meet Accessibility Requirements?

Certain valid situations may prevent a public entity from meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA for a specific website or mobile app. For instance, technical or legal limitations may prevent full conformance. The rule provides some options for managing these situations.

When a website or mobile app does not meet accessibility requirements, a conforming alternative version that allows people with disabilities to access equivalent information and functionality may be provided.

A website or mobile app that doesn't conform to WCAG 2.1 Level AA may be acceptable if it shows that nonconformance has a minimal impact on people with disabilities. This situation is explicitly defined in the rule. It should not be taken as a reason to avoid meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

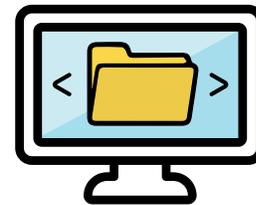
Only in exceptional circumstances would this option be appropriate, and public entities have the burden of presenting evidence that disabled people can access the same information and functionality, and participate or benefit from services, programs, and activities in an equivalent way to nondisabled people.

Ultimately, the best approach is to combine meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA as far as possible and validate accessibility through usability testing with people with disabilities.



How Do We Handle Legacy Content?

Public entities may have large quantities of older content, including web content and documents in PDF or Word format. Retrospectively remediating all of this content could be very challenging, especially for smaller entities, and the ADA rule recognizes this through certain exemptions.



The ADA Title II rule has a specific definition of archived content, which is exempt from the technical accessibility requirements. Archived web content may be exempt if:

- It existed before the compliance deadline that applies to the public entity
- It is retained solely for reference or recordkeeping
- It is placed in a clearly labeled archive section

However, if archived content is still actively used, it must be made accessible, or alternative formats must be provided upon request. And if content that a public entity claims to be archived is updated later, then it no longer meets the definition of archived content and becomes subject to the requirements of the Title II rule.

Are Digital Documents Exempt From Requirements?

Digital documents provided by public entities, like PDFs or Microsoft Word files, are addressed in the Title II rule, which refers to them as “conventional electronic documents.” Documents need to meet the rule’s accessibility requirements, with the following exceptions:

- Any digital document published before the compliance deadline is exempt from the rule’s requirements.
- Any digital document that is password-protected or otherwise secured and contains information about an individual, their property, or their account is exempt from this rule’s requirements.

Note that even though a document may be exempt from the rule’s accessibility requirements, under the ADA, public entities must respond to legitimate requests to provide the information contained in the document in an accessible way.

How Should Public Entities Handle Inaccessible Third-Party Content?

Public entities are responsible for ensuring that any web content or mobile app functionality they provide to the public is accessible, even if it was created by a third party on behalf of the public entity. This includes:

- Ensuring that any third-party platforms used for public services (e.g., online payment portals) comply with the requirements of the Title II rule.
- Providing alternative formats (e.g., accessible HTML versions) if existing content or functionality cannot be remediated.

Public entities should establish a procurement policy that specifies vendors' accessibility obligations in contractual relationships.

How Should a Public Entity Gather Feedback on Accessibility Efforts?

Maintaining an open communication channel is essential so that people with disabilities can provide feedback on the accessibility of websites and mobile apps, report issues, and get help while the issues are being fixed. Public entities should:

- Provide information on each website and mobile app regarding accessibility, including contact details for reporting issues and requesting help.
- Identify someone responsible for monitoring and triaging feedback, including directing it to the appropriate person or team for remediation, and communicating with the person who reported the issue.
- Prioritize fixes reported by people with disabilities.
- Conduct periodic user research with people with disabilities to identify how well services and programs provided through websites and mobile apps work and where improvements could be made.

With these foundational steps in place, public entities can confidently advance in their accessibility journey.

Do the Rule's Accessibility Requirements Apply to Social Media Content?

Any social media content posted by the public entity **after the deadline**, including text, images, and multimedia, is subject to the rule's accessibility requirements.

However, any social media content posted by the public entity **before the deadline** is exempt. In addition, any content posted voluntarily by third parties, in other words, when a public entity has not specifically contracted a third party to provide the content, is not subject to the rule.

This includes comments made by members of the public on blog posts, news items, and social media posts published by the public entity.

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD COMPLIANCE

By following a well-structured accessibility blueprint, public entities can create a digital environment that is both compliant and user-friendly. Acting now is your key to starting a successful long-term accessibility program. By implementing these strategies, public entities can create lasting, inclusive digital environments that serve all users effectively.



APPENDIX:

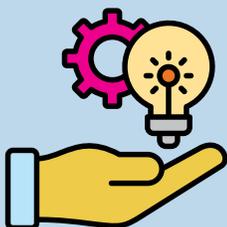
ADA Title II Digital Accessibility Checklist



This simple checklist highlights some key accessibility practices. Use it to quickly assess the accessibility level of a website, mobile app, or digital document.

Start by focusing on these critical accessibility questions:

- Can you navigate to and interact with all links, buttons, form fields, and other controls using only a keyboard? Is there a clear visible indication of which link or control currently has keyboard focus?
- Does each page or screen have a title that succinctly describes the page's purpose?
- Have descriptive headings been provided for content sections, and if so, have they been identified as headings?
- Do all links have text that describes where the link leads to?
- Does each image have an appropriate text alternative?
- Is there sufficient color contrast between the text, page, or screen background?
- Do all videos with audio have accurate captions?
- Have all form fields been provided with clear labels?
- Do forms have error messages that are easy to find and act on?



Addressing these issues gets you off to a great start, but remember that ADA Title II compliance requires that you test against all Level A and Level AA success criteria of WCAG 2.1.



Your Accessibility Partner

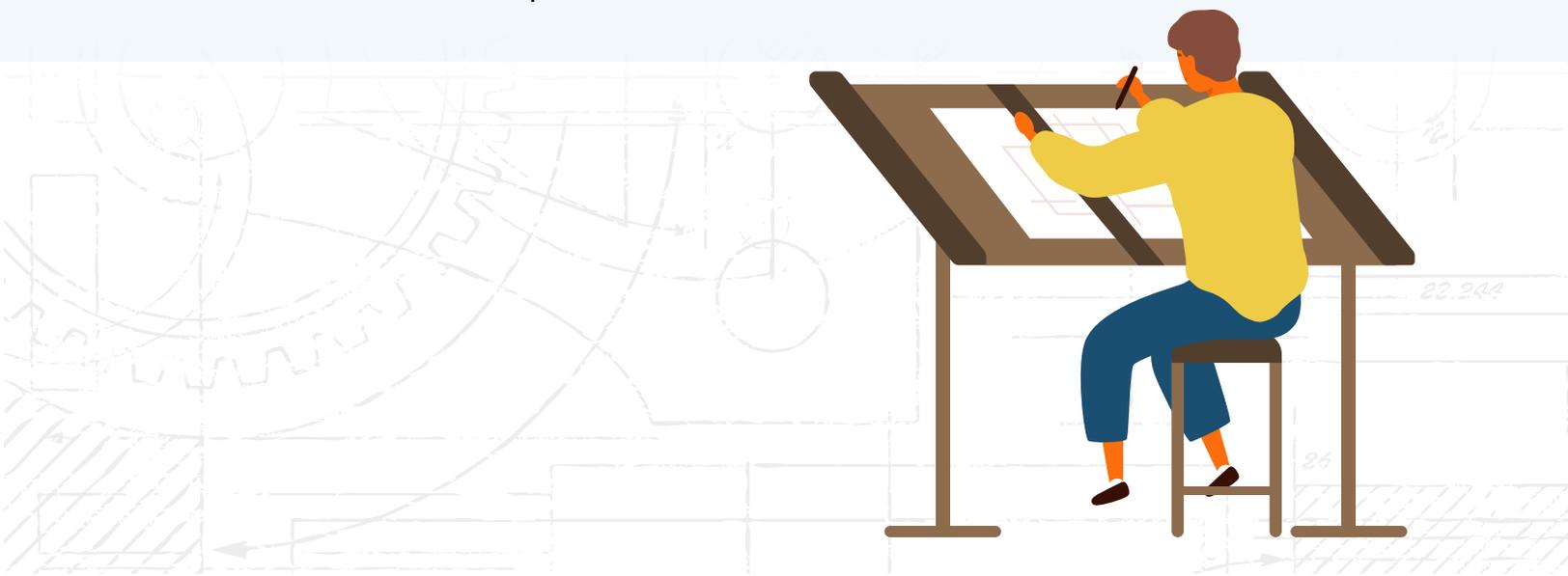
Now that you have your digital accessibility blueprint in hand, you're equipped to take the next steps with confidence.

Whether you're starting from scratch or refining existing efforts, your strategy matters — and so does your partner. TPGi® can help you assess your current infrastructure, identify key gaps, and build sustainable processes that align with ADA Title II requirements.

With decades of experience, deep technical expertise, and tools designed for teams of all sizes, TPGi is here to help you design, implement, and maintain accessible digital environments — for everyone.

Get Started Today

[Let TPGi help you](#) confidently assess, design, and implement a plan that meets ADA Title II and Title III requirements.



This guide provides information about accessibility laws and regulations but is not legal advice. You should consult a lawyer for advice on specific legal issues or problems.

About TPGi

TPGi®, a Vispero® company, provides digital accessibility software and services to help businesses reduce risk, grow revenue, and improve user experience. With over 20 years of experience and 21 employees actively influencing accessibility standards on the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), TPGi offers the most robust knowledge base and accessibility expertise in the industry and award-winning self-service kiosk software. Our tailored approach has enabled 1,000+ customers to achieve the best outcomes for their businesses, employees, and consumers. Trust the experts to guide your accessibility journey.