

Digital Accessibility Maturity Model for Vendors:

Example strategies for growth

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Dimensions

Each dimension below is linked to the respective section of the document that includes the self-assessment rubric and corresponding example strategies for growth from one level to the next. The list of strategies is not intended to be exhaustive.

- [Leadership & strategic commitment](#)
- [Risk management](#)
- [Roles & responsibilities](#)
- [Product & content development](#)
- [Quality assurance & evaluation](#)
- [Communication & documentation](#)
- [Procurement & contracting](#)
- [Internal capacity building](#)
- [User engagement & feedback](#)

- [Continuous improvement](#)

Leadership & strategic commitment

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Leadership & strategic commitment	No leadership engagement; accessibility is not recognized as a priority.	Leadership acknowledges accessibility but treats it as a compliance requirement, not a strategic goal.	Leadership includes accessibility in strategy, allocates resources, and tracks progress.	Accessibility is championed by leadership, fully embedded in business strategy, and resourced long-term.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Assign an executive sponsor
 - Identify a senior leader who will serve as the primary advocate for accessibility within the organization.
 - The executive sponsor should regularly communicate the importance of accessibility internally.
- Develop a business case showing ROI and legal risks
 - Clearly outline potential financial and legal risks related to non-compliance with accessibility standards.
 - Highlight market opportunities and competitive advantages associated with accessible products.

Developing to Established

- Create an official accessibility statement and share it publicly
 - Develop a concise but clear accessibility statement detailing the organization's commitment to accessibility, standards adhered to (e.g., WCAG 2.1 AA), and ongoing efforts.
 - Post this statement prominently on your website, product materials, and internal communication channels.
- Define company-wide accessibility goals with measurable outcomes
 - Identify measurable goals aligned with broader company objectives (e.g., "All new product releases will meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards").
 - Establish clear key performance indicators (KPIs) to regularly track accessibility progress.
- Allocate resources for accessibility improvements
 - Set a dedicated budget for accessibility initiatives (training, tools, audits, remediation).
 - Ensure that teams have access to the necessary expertise and tools.

Established to Embedded

- Integrate accessibility into company strategic planning
 - Explicitly include accessibility in annual strategic goals and long-term planning.
 - Regularly discuss accessibility priorities in executive-level meetings and strategic planning sessions.
- Report accessibility progress at leadership meetings
 - Include accessibility updates as a regular item in executive or leadership team meetings.

- Highlight successes, discuss challenges openly, and adjust strategy as necessary.
- Include accessibility in performance reviews and hiring expectations
 - Incorporate accessibility-related responsibilities or goals into performance evaluations for relevant roles.
 - Include accessibility knowledge or experience as preferred criteria in job descriptions for new hires.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Integrate accessibility into corporate long-term goals
 - Embed accessibility goals into the organization's long-term strategic planning processes and communicate these goals internally and externally.
 - Ensure alignment with broader CSR or ESG initiatives.
- Appoint a Chief Accessibility Officer or similar executive-level role
 - Designate a dedicated senior executive position responsible for guiding the company's strategic accessibility vision and ensuring sustained commitment and accountability.
- Publish an annual accessibility report outlining progress, challenges, and next steps
 - Create transparency through a publicly available annual report that highlights key accessibility achievements, identifies remaining barriers, and clearly states future goals and planned innovations.

Resources

- [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\) Introduction](#) Overview of digital accessibility fundamentals.
- [The Business Case for Digital Accessibility \(W3C WAI\)](#) Clear arguments for leadership to invest in accessibility.

Risk management

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Risk management	No awareness of accessibility risks; no risk identification or mitigation strategies.	Some recognition of risks, but no structured approach to prioritization or mitigation.	Accessibility risks are documented, prioritized, and addressed systematically.	Risk mitigation is integrated into operations; continuous monitoring and proactive measures are in place.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Conduct an initial risk assessment to identify legal and reputational exposure
 - Identify areas within the organization where accessibility gaps could pose legal or reputational risks.
 - Document potential impacts of inaccessibility on business operations, customer experience, and compliance obligations.
- Assign a team or individual to track compliance risks
 - Clearly designate responsibility for monitoring and managing accessibility-related compliance risks.
 - Ensure the assigned person or team reports regularly on identified risks to relevant stakeholders.

- Begin tracking customer complaints related to accessibility
 - Create or adapt existing customer support processes to log accessibility-specific complaints systematically.
 - Use the data from these complaints to highlight emerging accessibility risk areas.

Developing to Established

- Develop a formal risk mitigation plan
 - Create a structured plan outlining specific actions to address identified accessibility risks (e.g., updates to VPAT/ACR, remediation of priority issues).
 - Ensure the plan includes clear timelines, responsibilities, and criteria for measuring success.
- Establish compliance checkpoints in product development
 - Integrate accessibility compliance checkpoints into existing product development lifecycles.
 - Clearly document when and how accessibility evaluations occur at each project milestone.
- Train staff on legal accessibility obligations (ADA, Rehabilitation Act, WCAG)
 - Provide targeted training for relevant staff (legal, development, QA, procurement) about accessibility laws, standards, and compliance obligations.
 - Regularly update training to reflect changes in regulations or standards.

Established to Embedded

- Implement risk tracking for accessibility compliance

- Establish ongoing monitoring of accessibility risks and compliance status through automated tools, manual evaluations, and user feedback.
 - Document and regularly communicate risk management outcomes to leadership.
- Conduct periodic legal audits with compliance teams
 - Schedule and perform regular internal or external audits to proactively identify and address emerging compliance risks.
 - Use audit findings to refine accessibility strategies continuously.
- Establish processes to address accessibility throughout a product/project lifecycle
 - Ensure accessibility considerations are consistently integrated from initial concept through release and post-launch maintenance.
 - Document clear procedures for accessibility risk identification and mitigation at each stage of the product lifecycle.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Implement real-time accessibility compliance monitoring
 - Deploy continuous monitoring tools and processes that proactively detect accessibility issues as soon as they arise.
 - Respond immediately with corrective actions to minimize exposure.
- Partner with legal experts and disability rights organizations

- Build ongoing relationships with legal and accessibility experts who can proactively inform your organization about emerging regulatory trends or changes.
- Actively collaborate with external disability rights groups for input and advocacy support.
- Contribute to industry-wide accessibility standards development
 - Engage in or sponsor initiatives related to accessibility standards, policy advocacy, or research, positioning your organization as a leader in accessibility risk management.

Resources

- [U.S. Department of Justice – ADA Web Accessibility Guidance](#) Official guidance on ADA Title II & III requirements and how organizations can mitigate legal risks related to web accessibility.

Roles & responsibilities

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Roles & responsibilities	No defined accessibility roles or responsibilities; efforts are informal and unstructured.	Some employees work on accessibility, but roles are unclear and not assigned formally.	Defined accessibility roles exist in key teams (e.g., product, design, compliance) with some accountability.	Accessibility is integrated into roles across the company, with leadership oversight and clear accountability in all departments.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Assign at least one person responsible for accessibility oversight
 - Clearly identify and communicate the individual(s) responsible for overseeing accessibility efforts within your organization.
- Educate teams on why accessibility matters
 - Provide foundational training or resources that explain accessibility's importance from legal, ethical, and business perspectives.
 - Share concrete examples of how accessibility positively impacts business, compliance, innovation, and customer satisfaction.
- Identify teams impacted by accessibility requirements
 - Clearly identify and document which departments or roles (development, design, procurement, customer support, etc.) are responsible for accessibility-related tasks.

Developing to Established

- Develop an accessibility roles & responsibilities matrix
 - Create a clear document mapping specific accessibility tasks and responsibilities to defined roles and teams across the organization.
 - Regularly review and update the matrix as roles, teams, or responsibilities evolve within the organization.
- Integrate accessibility into existing job descriptions

- Update job descriptions and expectations for relevant roles to explicitly include accessibility responsibilities and required competencies.
 - Provide training for hiring managers to ensure accurate representation of accessibility requirements in recruitment materials.
- Provide team-specific training (e.g., development, QA, marketing)
 - Deliver specialized accessibility training tailored to the needs and workflows of different teams, ensuring they have practical knowledge for their tasks.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of team-specific training regularly and adjust content based on participant feedback and performance.

Established to Embedded

- Establish a cross-functional accessibility team
 - Form an internal team with representatives from key areas (design, development, QA, legal, marketing, procurement) to ensure accessibility is integrated throughout the organization.
 - Ensure this team has formal recognition and clear authority to influence and guide organizational accessibility practices.
- Appoint accessibility champions within teams
 - Identify motivated individuals within various departments who can advocate for accessibility, support colleagues, and reinforce accessibility best practices internally.
 - Regularly recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of accessibility champions, increasing visibility and internal advocacy.

- Formalize accessibility accountability in employee evaluations
 - Incorporate accessibility performance criteria into regular employee assessments and feedback processes.
 - Provide clear examples and expectations to managers conducting evaluations, ensuring fair and consistent assessments.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Require continuous accessibility training for all employees
 - Provide regular updates, refreshers, or advanced accessibility training beyond initial onboarding to maintain and expand organizational knowledge and skills.
- Establish an internal Accessibility Council
 - Form an advisory group focused on continuous oversight, advocacy, and strategic planning for accessibility.
- Define succession plans for accessibility leadership
 - Plan proactively to ensure continuity in leadership and expertise for managing accessibility long-term.

Product & content development

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Product & content development	Accessibility is not considered in product design or development.	Some accessibility considerations, but inconsistently applied; mostly reactive to issues.	Accessibility is integrated into product design and development processes, with clear standards.	Accessibility is a core design principle, with user-centered testing and continuous improvements.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Review existing products for basic accessibility issues
 - Conduct preliminary assessments to identify fundamental accessibility problems in current products.
 - Document identified issues clearly, and communicate them to relevant product and development teams for remediation.
- Implement basic accessibility strategies
 - Immediately adopt simple improvements like alt text for images, and effective color contrast.
 - Provide simple checklists or guides to ensure teams can quickly implement basic accessibility enhancements independently.

- Start basic WCAG 2.1 training for development teams
 - Provide introductory training sessions or resources covering basic WCAG principles to product teams.
 - Include practical, real-world examples in training to help teams understand accessibility issues clearly and apply them effectively.

Developing to Established

- Establish internal accessibility design & development guidelines
 - Create a clear internal resource documenting specific standards and best practices for accessible product design and development.
 - Regularly update guidelines as new standards emerge, ensuring all teams work from current best practices.
- Include accessibility criteria in feature development
 - Require accessibility checks as part of product feature acceptance criteria or “definition of done.”
 - Clearly communicate these criteria to all product teams, and provide specific examples to illustrate acceptable levels of accessibility compliance.
- Introduce basic accessibility testing processes
 - Implement routine automated and manual accessibility checks during development and pre-release phases.
 - Provide templates or checklists to guide product teams in conducting consistent, structured accessibility evaluations.

Established to Embedded

- Move from compliance-based accessibility to universal design principles
 - Embed inclusive design practices that proactively consider diverse user needs beyond basic compliance requirements.
 - Provide resources, training, and examples illustrating how universal design improves overall usability and innovation for all users.
- Ensure accessibility is core to project design and development
 - Integrate accessibility considerations into product roadmaps and planning processes, making it central to product strategy.
 - Regularly assess and refine processes to ensure accessibility is seamlessly integrated into standard development workflows.
- Invest in emerging technologies for accessibility innovation
 - Allocate resources toward R&D in accessibility, exploring new technologies like AI or advanced assistive solutions.
 - Provide teams with dedicated time and support to experiment with and develop innovative solutions for accessibility.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Build internal accessibility R&D initiatives
 - Establish dedicated research and innovation efforts focused on creating advanced solutions for accessibility challenges.

- Engage users with disabilities throughout the development lifecycle
 - Regularly involve users with disabilities in testing and feedback loops to continuously refine and enhance product accessibility.
- Lead industry collaboration on advanced accessibility methods
 - Actively participate in or lead industry-wide accessibility innovation initiatives and standard-setting bodies.

Resources

- [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) Overview](#) Comprehensive overview of WCAG standards used by development and design teams for building accessible digital products.

Quality assurance & evaluation

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Quality assurance & evaluation	No accessibility testing or evaluation occurs.	Limited or ad-hoc testing, primarily automated; remediation is inconsistent; relies on third-party ACR/VPAT without internal understanding.	Routine accessibility audits take place, combining automated, manual, and user testing.	Testing is embedded in development cycles, with continuous accessibility monitoring and feedback loops; uses ACR/VPAT as part of a broader, ongoing internal evaluation strategy.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Train QA team on basic accessibility testing methods
 - Introduce essential manual testing methods such as keyboard-only navigation and basic screen reader usage.
 - Provide a basic checklist of accessibility issues to routinely check during testing.
- Introduce automated accessibility testing tools (e.g., WAVE, axe)
 - Select and implement at least one automated accessibility testing tool for initial evaluations.
 - Train the QA team on interpreting automated testing results and reporting issues.
- Start manual accessibility checks on critical user journeys
 - Identify essential product features or workflows and manually evaluate these for accessibility.
 - Document findings and report significant barriers for remediation.

Developing to Established

- Expand testing to include automated, manual, and user testing
 - Integrate a combined approach that uses automated tools, manual testing techniques, and periodic testing with users who have disabilities.
 - Establish a clear schedule to ensure routine comprehensive accessibility evaluations.

- Develop an accessibility bug tracking & remediation process
 - Clearly define a structured process for identifying, prioritizing, documenting, and tracking accessibility issues through resolution.
 - Train QA and development teams on following this established accessibility remediation workflow.
- Integrate accessibility into unit & regression testing
 - Embed accessibility testing checkpoints directly into ongoing software testing procedures and protocols.
 - Ensure regression tests specifically include validation for previously resolved accessibility issues to prevent recurrence.

Established to Embedded

- Require all features to meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards before launch
 - Clearly document and communicate accessibility acceptance criteria for each product release or update.
 - Establish a rigorous review and approval process ensuring that features do not launch without verified accessibility compliance.
- Perform scheduled, periodic accessibility audits
 - Schedule regular internal or third-party accessibility audits to proactively identify issues across the entire product ecosystem.
 - Use audit findings to inform continuous improvement cycles and training needs.
- Automate real-time accessibility monitoring

- Implement ongoing monitoring tools to detect new accessibility issues as they appear, providing rapid notifications and allowing for timely remediation.
- Integrate real-time monitoring into continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD) pipelines to automate testing throughout development cycles.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Implement AI-powered anomaly detection for accessibility issues
 - Explore and integrate artificial intelligence solutions to proactively detect subtle or complex accessibility barriers.
 - Continually refine AI models and processes based on real-world effectiveness, user feedback, and internal testing results.
- Partner with accessibility research organizations
 - Regularly collaborate with external accessibility research institutions or experts, staying current with cutting-edge testing and evaluation methods.
 - Share insights gained through these partnerships internally to enhance organizational accessibility testing practices continuously.

Resources

- [W3C – Accessibility Testing Tools](#) Curated list of tools (automated, semi-automated, manual) to perform accessibility evaluations effectively.
- [Deque University – Accessibility Testing Resources](#) Free resource center providing guides and tutorials on effective accessibility testing practices.

Communication & documentation

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Communication & documentation	No accessibility documentation or transparency in accessibility status.	Some documentation exists but is incomplete or outdated; no clear accessibility statement.	Accessibility documentation is available, regularly updated, and includes transparency on known issues.	Documentation is comprehensive, proactively shared, and updated based on feedback and audits.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Publish a basic accessibility statement
 - Develop a simple, clear public accessibility statement outlining your commitment and providing contact information for accessibility-related issues.
 - Place the statement visibly on the company website and product documentation.
- Train customer support teams on handling accessibility requests
 - Provide foundational training for customer support staff about accessibility basics and how to respond effectively to common accessibility inquiries or requests.
 - Develop and share quick-reference resources for support staff to use in responding to accessibility issues.

- Document known accessibility barriers and workarounds
 - Clearly document known product limitations in terms of accessibility and communicate these transparently to customers and users.
 - Provide interim solutions or workarounds wherever feasible until permanent fixes are deployed.

Developing to Established

- Develop Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs) for each product
 - Regularly complete accurate and detailed ACRs (VPATs) to document the accessibility compliance level of each product or service.
 - Share these documents proactively with customers, stakeholders, and procurement teams.
- Ensure accessibility help documentation is accessible
 - Review and remediate product documentation and help resources to ensure they meet WCAG standards.
 - Train documentation and support teams on creating accessible help materials.
- Provide accessibility information during product onboarding
 - Clearly highlight accessibility features, known limitations, and available support resources in onboarding and training materials.
 - Ensure new users understand how to navigate accessibility settings and request support if needed.

Established to Embedded

- Maintain live accessibility updates for users

- Offer real-time or regularly updated communications about accessibility improvements, known issues, and planned enhancements.
 - Use multiple channels (website, newsletters, direct customer updates) to communicate consistently and transparently.
- Establish accessibility transparency reports
 - Produce periodic reports that publicly document accessibility progress, user feedback, compliance audits, and remediation outcomes.
 - Use these reports to foster trust and communicate your ongoing commitment clearly and openly.
- Create a public accessibility roadmap
 - Share a clear, public-facing accessibility roadmap detailing upcoming goals, product enhancements, timelines, and key milestones.
 - Regularly update this roadmap based on progress, feedback, and strategic adjustments.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Publish open-source accessibility best practices
 - Contribute detailed accessibility documentation, tools, or guidelines to the wider industry, supporting collective improvement.
 - Continuously update shared resources based on your organization's learning and industry feedback.
- Develop community engagement initiatives involving users with disabilities

- Regularly engage and collaborate with disability communities and advocacy groups to ensure ongoing alignment with user needs.
- Clearly communicate internally how these engagements influence product, service, and policy decisions.
- Create interactive accessibility learning resources
 - Develop publicly accessible, interactive learning resources that demonstrate your organization's commitment and knowledge in accessibility.
 - Regularly refresh and expand resources to reflect evolving best practices, standards, and organizational innovations.

Procurement & contracting

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Procurement & contracting	Accessibility is not addressed in proposals, contracts, or customer interactions.	Accessibility is included in some proposals and contracts but lacks detail, enforcement, or structured collaboration with customers.	Accessibility documentation is standard in proposals and contracts, with clear responsibilities and some engagement with customers.	Accessibility is fully integrated into procurement, contracts include enforceable commitments, and the vendor actively collaborates with customers to improve accessibility.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Begin including basic accessibility details in procurement responses
 - Clearly state your product's accessibility status, commitment, and plans within procurement documentation or bids.
 - Ensure sales and procurement teams understand the importance of communicating accessibility clearly.
- Develop a preliminary accessibility statement outlining your commitment
 - Create and share a brief statement on your accessibility efforts as part of procurement proposals and vendor documentation.
 - Clearly communicate points of contact and resources for further accessibility inquiries.

Developing to Established

- Standardize detailed accessibility documentation (ACR/VPAT) for all proposals
 - Ensure all proposals consistently include detailed and accurate Accessibility Conformance Reports (VPATs), clearly communicating product compliance levels.
 - Regularly update and review VPATs to reflect the current state of accessibility.
- Clearly define vendor and client accessibility responsibilities in contracts
 - Explicitly include accessibility expectations, responsibilities, and accountability measures within procurement contracts.

- Develop clear language that specifies how accessibility compliance and remediation issues will be addressed.

Established to Embedded

- Proactively collaborate with clients on user accessibility needs
 - Regularly engage with clients to understand their users' accessibility requirements and challenges.
 - Use this information proactively to enhance your products or services in ways that directly support client accessibility goals.
- Ensure contracts include enforceable accessibility compliance commitments
 - Include clear, measurable, enforceable accessibility compliance requirements in vendor contracts.
 - Regularly monitor and report vendor accessibility compliance as a condition for ongoing partnerships.
- Regularly update procurement documentation to reflect accessibility improvements
 - Continuously review and enhance procurement language and documentation to reflect your latest accessibility achievements and compliance improvements.
 - Ensure that all procurement-related staff are aware of these updates and how to communicate them effectively.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Continuously refine procurement processes based on evolving standards
 - Regularly review and update procurement and contracting language to reflect emerging accessibility standards, technologies, and user expectations.

- Clearly communicate these refinements internally to procurement and sales teams.
- Establish incentive programs for vendors exceeding accessibility standards
 - Develop mechanisms to reward or incentivize vendors and suppliers who consistently exceed basic accessibility requirements.
 - Regularly highlight and promote these vendor successes internally and externally as exemplary practices.
- Lead accessibility improvement initiatives
 - Actively participate in or lead collaborative initiatives aimed at improving overall accessibility compliance across your industry.
 - Communicate these efforts widely to encourage broader industry participation and raise standards collectively.

Resources

- [Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology \(PEAT\) – Buy IT! Accessibility in Procurement](#) Clear guidance and resources for incorporating accessibility into procurement processes and contract language.
- [General Services Administration \(GSA\) – Section 508 Procurement Guidelines](#) Federal guidelines and tools to help organizations include accessibility requirements in procurement and contracting.

Internal capacity building

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Internal capacity building	No accessibility training or internal communication on accessibility.	Some training is available, but it's optional and not role-specific.	Accessibility training is provided regularly, role-specific, and tracked for effectiveness.	Accessibility knowledge-sharing is continuous, with mentorship, communities of practice, and required training.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Identify a responsible individual for accessibility training planning
 - Clearly designate a person to coordinate and initiate basic accessibility training efforts within the company.
 - Ensure this person understands accessibility fundamentals and how to communicate effectively internally.
- Provide basic accessibility training to leadership and staff
 - Offer introductory training sessions or resources to raise initial awareness of accessibility standards, needs, and business implications.

- Share easy-to-follow accessibility resources and guidelines to support ongoing awareness and understanding.

Developing to Established

- Develop role-specific accessibility training (developers, designers, QA, sales)
 - Tailor and implement training programs to meet the specific accessibility learning needs and workflows of different internal roles.
 - Schedule regular refreshers and updates to maintain team knowledge and skills.
- Require accessibility onboarding for new employees
 - Incorporate essential accessibility training and resources into the onboarding process for all new hires.
 - Ensure new employees understand their specific responsibilities related to accessibility.

Established to Embedded

- Establish an ongoing accessibility training program
 - Provide continuous, structured accessibility education programs and support employees in obtaining certifications or advanced training.
 - Regularly review and update training materials and resources to reflect current best practices.
- Assign accessibility champions in each department
 - Identify and empower departmental champions who can continuously advocate for accessibility and mentor colleagues.

- Provide these champions with ongoing professional development and recognition.
- Create an internal accessibility community of practice
 - Develop internal groups or forums that regularly share experiences, best practices, and insights to sustain accessibility knowledge and momentum.
 - Encourage peer-to-peer support, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across teams.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Provide advanced accessibility training and certifications
 - Offer advanced or specialized accessibility certifications to encourage employees' professional growth and expertise.
 - Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and update them to reflect new research, methods, and standards.
- Sponsor internal accessibility-focused innovation labs or hackathons
 - Regularly organize events encouraging employees to develop creative, innovative accessibility solutions.
 - Share and recognize innovations generated from these activities across the organization.
- Offer clear accessibility career growth pathways
 - Provide structured career paths for employees interested in specializing or advancing in accessibility-related roles within your organization.
 - Regularly review and enhance these career pathways, ensuring they reflect organizational needs and industry trends.

Resources

- [W3C WAI – Curricula on Web Accessibility](#) Free training resources and curricula suitable for internal accessibility training across multiple organizational roles.
- [WebAIM – Accessibility Training](#) Free articles, tutorials, and training resources ideal for building internal accessibility knowledge and skills.

User engagement & feedback

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
User engagement & feedback	No engagement with users with disabilities.	Occasional feedback is collected, but not structured or acted upon systematically.	User feedback is collected and used to improve accessibility, with some structured engagement.	Users with disabilities are actively involved in product development, evaluation, and decision-making.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Set up a basic user feedback form for accessibility issues
 - Ensure the form is easy to locate and use on your website or support channels, clearly indicating its purpose related to accessibility.

- Regularly review submitted feedback and prioritize actions based on common themes or urgent issues.
- Require customer support teams to log accessibility issues from users
 - Provide clear instructions and categories for customer support teams to consistently capture and document accessibility issues.
 - Regularly communicate summarized feedback reports from customer support to product and development teams.

Developing to Established

- Establish a user testing group with disabled users
 - Identify and regularly engage a diverse group of users with disabilities for testing and feedback on product features and updates.
 - Clearly document user insights and integrate this information into your accessibility remediation plans.
- Conduct periodic accessibility surveys
 - Distribute structured surveys at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly or bi-annually) to actively collect feedback about accessibility from users.
 - Analyze survey results systematically and share actionable insights internally with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers.
- Use feedback to inform product development
 - Regularly review collected feedback with product and engineering teams, clearly outlining how the insights are influencing product improvements.

- Communicate back to users how their feedback has been incorporated, demonstrating transparency and responsiveness.

Established to Embedded

- Formalize an ongoing Accessibility Advisory Panel of disabled users
 - Regularly convene the Advisory Panel to review strategic accessibility decisions, product plans, and user experiences.
 - Provide clear documentation and recognition of the Advisory Panel's contributions internally and externally.
- Provide stipends and other incentives for user participation in accessibility testing
 - Clearly define a compensation or incentive structure to fairly acknowledge and encourage ongoing participation from users with disabilities.
 - Regularly evaluate and refine these incentives based on feedback from participants to ensure effectiveness and fairness.
- Co-design products with ongoing input from users with disabilities
 - Proactively include disabled users in the product design and planning process from the earliest stages, ensuring their input actively shapes outcomes.
 - Regularly communicate internally about how co-design efforts have tangibly improved product usability and accessibility.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Fund accessibility research grants or partnerships

- Invest in external research or partnerships that explore innovative accessibility solutions, fostering ongoing learning and improvements.
 - Share research outcomes widely within your organization to promote awareness and encourage internal innovation.
- Establish customer advisory panels of disabled users to guide product development
 - Clearly define and communicate the role and impact of these customer advisory panels internally, highlighting their strategic value.
 - Regularly integrate advisory panel recommendations into strategic planning and communicate back outcomes to panel members.
- Develop sustained co-design practices with users with disabilities
 - Institutionalize processes for co-design with users, ensuring their direct input is consistently part of your design and development cycles.
 - Share success stories from these practices internally and externally to encourage widespread adoption.

Continuous improvement

Self-assessment rubric

Dimension	0: Absent	1: Developing	2: Established	3: Embedded
Continuous improvement	No accessibility improvement efforts or tracking.	Accessibility improvements occur reactively when issues arise.	Accessibility improvement plans are in place and implemented proactively.	Accessibility is continuously refined, exceeding compliance, with a strong culture of innovation and feedback.

Example strategies for growth

Absent to Developing

- Establish a basic accessibility tracking system
 - Begin using a structured method (such as a shared spreadsheet or simple reporting tool) to log accessibility efforts, achievements, and issues consistently.
 - Regularly update this tracking system to maintain a clear record of improvements and unresolved issues.
- Schedule periodic accessibility reviews
 - Set a recurring schedule (quarterly or semi-annually) to review accessibility progress, identify new challenges, and adjust action plans.

- Involve relevant stakeholders from different teams in these reviews to foster a broader sense of ownership and accountability.
- Identify a dedicated accessibility lead
 - Clearly assign responsibility to an individual who oversees tracking, reporting, and communicating accessibility progress.
 - Ensure this person has the support and resources to coordinate effectively across teams.

Developing to Established

- Implement long-term accessibility benchmarks
 - Define clear, measurable benchmarks for accessibility goals that extend beyond immediate compliance, aligning with broader company objectives.
 - Regularly measure and publicly share progress toward meeting these benchmarks to promote transparency and accountability.
- Integrate accessibility into product lifecycle roadmaps
 - Embed accessibility goals into your organization's long-term product or service roadmaps, ensuring it is a sustained strategic priority.
 - Communicate these integrated goals internally and externally, reinforcing organizational commitment.
- Establish regular feedback loops
 - Implement structured methods for regularly collecting internal and external feedback about accessibility improvements and user experience.

- Use this feedback proactively to inform ongoing enhancements and strategic adjustments.

Established to Embedded

- Develop advanced accessibility innovation projects
 - Initiate projects specifically focused on exploring and developing new accessibility solutions or improving existing accessibility practices within your organization.
 - Dedicate resources (staff, time, budget) explicitly toward these innovation projects, reflecting a strong organizational commitment to accessibility leadership.
- Establish an accessibility mentorship and training program
 - Create internal mentorship programs to build deeper expertise and foster career growth for individuals specializing in accessibility.
 - Offer specialized professional learning opportunities, certifications, or recognition to employees who actively champion accessibility practices.
- Recognize and celebrate accessibility achievements
 - Regularly highlight, share, and celebrate accessibility achievements within your organization to foster motivation and reinforce accessibility as a valued organizational priority.
 - Publicly acknowledge individuals or teams who demonstrate exemplary commitment to accessibility improvements.

Continuous Improvement (beyond Embedded)

- Set stretch goals beyond current WCAG compliance

- Identify and pursue accessibility objectives that go beyond existing compliance requirements, such as enhanced user experiences, improved usability, and proactive solutions to emerging accessibility challenges.
 - Foster internal innovation through stretch goals that encourage teams to develop next-generation accessibility solutions.
- Develop a culture of accessibility innovation and advocacy
 - Promote accessibility as an ongoing organizational value through leadership advocacy, internal communications, and visible support for accessibility initiatives.
 - Encourage and empower employees at all levels to actively identify, propose, and implement innovative accessibility improvements.
- Integrate accessibility into organizational learning and development
 - Embed ongoing accessibility training into professional development programs for all employees, continually updating content to reflect emerging practices.
 - Offer advanced, specialized accessibility training pathways and certifications to support continuous organizational expertise.
- Maintain active participation in external accessibility communities
 - Engage proactively with external communities, working groups, and industry forums to stay ahead of emerging accessibility trends, standards, and technologies.
 - Share your organization's learnings and best practices externally, positioning your company as a thought leader in digital accessibility.

Key terms

ACR (Accessibility Conformance Report)

An Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) documents how a digital product or service meets accessibility standards. It is generated using a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) and provides details on which WCAG criteria are supported, partially supported, or not supported. Vendors use ACRs to demonstrate accessibility compliance to customers, particularly in procurement processes. Often the term VPAT is used interchangeably with ACR.

VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template)

A VPAT is a standardized document used by vendors to report how well their product complies with accessibility standards, including WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and legal requirements like Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. When completed, the VPAT becomes an ACR, which organizations use to evaluate the accessibility of potential purchases. Often the term ACR is used interchangeably with VPAT.

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)

WCAG is a globally recognized set of technical accessibility standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). It provides guidelines for making digital content perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (POUR) for all users, including those with disabilities. The current technical standard set forth in regulation for ADA title II and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is WCAG 2.1 Level AA. A newer version of the WCAG standards has been published (version 2.2), and WCAG 3.0 is in development.

Document notes

- Resource by [Donna Murray](#), Digital Accessibility Specialist, NCDPI. When developing resources, I sometimes use AI tools to assist with brainstorming, summarizing, and synthesizing information.
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Document history

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