



MUNICIPAL WEBSITE COMPLIANCE TOOL

WCAG 2.1 AA Compliance Checklist for Government Websites

DOJ Title II ADA Final Rule • 20-Point Audit Framework

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Federal Compliance Deadlines — DOJ Title II ADA Final Rule

Larger jurisdictions (50,000+ population)

April 24, 2026

Smaller jurisdictions (under 50,000 population)

April 26, 2027

Use this checklist to assess your government website's compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA as required by the DOJ final rule under Title II of the ADA. Check each item your current site meets. Any unchecked item is a compliance gap that must be resolved before your deadline.

1 — Structure and Navigation

■ Every page has a unique, descriptive page title

The tag must describe the specific page — "Public Notices | Chippewa County" is correct. "Home" alone is not.

■ Pages use a logical heading hierarchy (H1 → H2 → H3)

H1 appears once per page. Heading levels are never skipped — no H1 directly to H3.

■ "Skip to main content" link at the top of every page

Allows keyboard and screen reader users to bypass navigation. May be visually hidden until focused.

■ HTML lang attribute is set on every page

must be present. Screen readers use this to select the correct voice profile.

■ Navigation landmarks are properly labeled

Main nav uses . Multiple nav elements each need a unique label.

■ All pages reachable via keyboard alone

Tab moves forward through interactive elements. Shift+Tab moves backward. No mouse required.

2 — Images and Media

■ All meaningful images have descriptive alt text

"Aerial view of the Soo Locks with a cargo ship" is correct. "image1.jpg" or "photo" is not.

■ Decorative images have empty alt attributes (alt="")

Images used for decoration must have alt="" — empty, not missing. Tells screen readers to skip them.

■ Videos have accurate closed captions

All pre-recorded video requires synchronized captions. Auto-generated captions must be reviewed and corrected.

■ Audio-only content has a text transcript

Meeting recordings, podcasts, and audio-only content need a full text transcript on the same page.

■ Complex images have extended text descriptions

Charts, graphs, and maps require a text description conveying the same data as the visual.

3 — Color and Contrast

■ Normal text meets 4.5:1 contrast ratio against its background

Body text under 18pt (14pt bold) must meet 4.5:1. Use WebAIM Contrast Checker to verify.

■ Large text meets 3:1 contrast ratio

Text 18pt or larger (14pt bold+) requires minimum 3:1. Applies to headings and display text.

■ Interactive elements meet 3:1 contrast against surroundings

Buttons, input borders, and links must have 3:1 contrast against adjacent colors.

■ Information is not conveyed by color alone

Required fields and error states need text or icons in addition to color. Red border alone fails.

4 — Forms and Interaction

■ All form inputs have associated label elements

Every input, select, and textarea needs a connected via the "for" attribute. Placeholder text alone fails.

■ Keyboard focus indicator is always visible

Focused elements must have a clearly visible outline or indicator when tabbing through the page.

■ Error messages identify the field and explain how to fix it

"Email address is required — enter a valid address like name@example.com" is correct. "Invalid input" is not.

■ Required fields marked without relying on color alone

Mark required fields with text ("required") or asterisk with a legend — not just red label text.

■ No content flashes more than 3 times per second

Flashing or strobing content can trigger seizures. Applies to animations, video, and dynamic updates.

5 — Documents and PDFs

■ Linked PDFs are tagged for accessibility

Tagged PDFs have defined structure (headings, lists, reading order). Scanned PDFs are never compliant without OCR and tagging.

■ PDF documents have a declared language

Set in Acrobat: File > Properties > Advanced > Reading Options > Language.

■ PDF tables have proper header cells

Data tables need TH header cells with scope attributes. Verify with Acrobat's Reading Order tool.

■ PDF form fields have accessible labels

Form fields need tooltip/description text readable by screen readers. Verify with Acrobat Accessibility Checker.

■ Meeting agendas and public notices are accessible

Consider publishing as HTML — inherently more accessible than PDF. Any PDF posted must be fully tagged.

How Did You Score?

18-20

Strong foundation Minor fixes needed

10-17

Moderate gaps Remediation required

Under 10

Significant exposure Audit urgently needed



Modernize • Accelerate • Deliver

Ready to Know Your Actual Compliance Status?

This checklist identifies obvious gaps. A professional audit finds the rest.

Free Consultation

Submit your URL. We assess and respond within 2 business days.

Full WCAG 2.1 AA Audit

Manual and automated testing with prioritized remediation report.

Compliant New Build

Headless CMS platform with accessibility built in from day one.

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This checklist covers common WCAG 2.1 AA requirements under the DOJ Title II final rule. It is not exhaustive and does not constitute a formal accessibility audit. Contact WAM DevTech for a complete professional assessment.

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